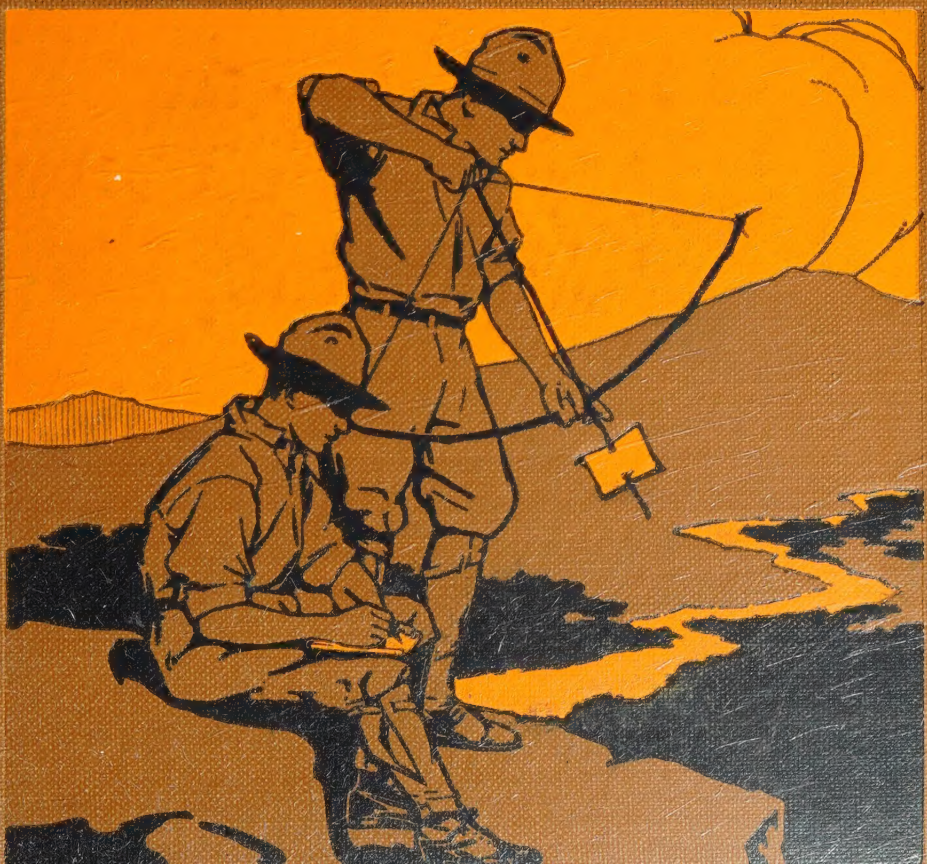
BOY SCOUTS OF THE AIR

ON FLATHEAD MOUNTAIN



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Merry Christmas
to Walter from
Marie

Boy Scouts of the Air Books

Boy Scouts of the Air on Flathead Mountain

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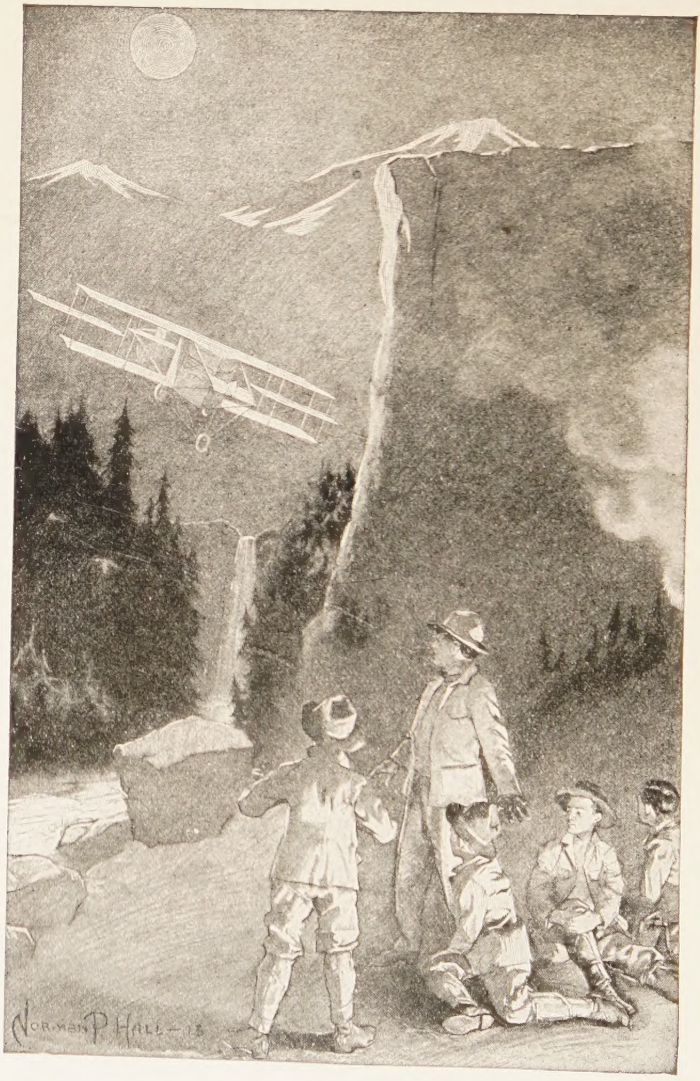

All were startled by a most remarkable noise. Instinctively they all looked up and beheld in the moonlight a very strange object. "It's an airship!" cried one of the boys.

The Boy Scouts of the Air on Flathead Mountain

BY
GORDON STUART

Illustrated by Norman P. Hall

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Mummy Canon	9
II	Something About Dr. Byrd	18
III	A Fall from the Air	27
IV	The Wreck and the Aviator	38
V	Lost!	47
VI	The Scream in the Waterfall	60
VII	A Badly Frightened Boy	71
VIII	Hal's Discovery	81
IX	Hal a Prisoner	95
X	The Mystery of the Leather Bag	107
XI	Convincing Bad	116
XII	Airship Plans	125
XIII	The "Painter"	136
XIV	Building the Airship	144
XV	Stolen Wealth	152
XVI	Flight	163
XVII	Exploring the Cave	172
XVIII	The Island in the Air	181
XIX	The Rescuing Airship	193
XX	The Panther and the Cave	203
XXI	To Flathead by Airship Again	211
XXII	Clearing Hal	221
XXIII	The Boy Scouts of the Air	229
XXIV	Mountain Lion Bridge	238

The Boy Scouts of the Air on Flathead Mountain

CHAPTER I

MUMMY CAÑON

"Mountain, pine tree, cañon, gulch,
Cookies, bacon! — like 'em much.
Canteen, hike-stick!
Hi-hi-hike-stick!
Lakefarm! mummy!
Flathead! — Ra-a-a!"

Thirty lusty juvenile throats, strong with frequent exercise, caused Mummy Cañon to ring with this school-yell. It was almost evening, and the boys of Lakefarm School were on their return from a day's outing in the mountains. Clad in Boy Scout uniforms and wearing Rough Rider hats, they presented a picturesque appearance in that wild, rocky, mountain country, while their school-yell echoed among the hills, bright in the setting sun.

It was midsummer, yet thirty of the forty-four

regular students were in attendance during the summer term, evidence of the popularity of the school, for they were all boys of the age that welcomes vacation time with cheers.

In spring this cañon was a beautiful place; in summer it lost some of its freshness, but was still beautiful; in fall it lost more of life, but beauty still clung to it; in winter, it was a picture that called for deep admiration. It also might well have been named Echo Cañon; indeed many in that part of Colorado often called it that. But Mummy Cañon it had been christened, and this was the only name by which it was known on the maps and in the guide books.

Interesting stories were told about this great mountain gorge. They had to do with the ancient inhabitants of the country, the cliff-dwellers, ruins of whose homes were to be found here and there high up in steep places. The boys of Lakefarm knew these stories by heart. They had been told over and over and added to until enough new and interesting details had been gathered around the original stories to fill a book.

Dr. Regulus Byrd, head master, Chief Scout, and owner of Lakefarm, was as peculiar as his

name. Some called him eccentric, but the boys of the school and the friends of the doctor did not agree. The boys loved him as few schoolmasters ever are loved; the older people of the district declared that when it came to a pinch, Dr. Byrd never lacked judgment.

The doctor and the two instructors of the school, Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter, were with the boys on the outing from which they were now returning. Mr. Frankland was a short, brisk, wide-awake man, who smiled frequently and shrewdly. Mr. Porter was an odd personage, dignified and very positive in all things, but an excellent instructor in manual training. After the procession had advanced well toward the heart of the gully and given two or three school-yells that raised the echoes, Mr. Porter said:

"Dr. Byrd, we're only three miles from home. Why not stop here, build a fire, and sit around and talk a while?"

"That's the stuff," came from several of the boys at the same time. Dr. Byrd had a boy's heart, and as there was no good reason for opposing the suggestion, he gave his consent.

In a jiffy the boys scattered in all directions in

search of firewood; up the side of the hill and along the near bank of a noisy mountain stream, and soon were returning with armfuls of dead wood. Most of them were experienced in building camp fires in true frontier style, and the work progressed rapidly.

Two of the boys, Hal Kenyon and Byron Bowler, were delegated to the work of starting the fire. This was not done by striking a match and touching it to some dry leaves. The method employed was one more suited to the romantic scene. First, Hal and Byron searched until they found two serviceable pieces of dry cottonwood root. Having good, strong, sharp pocketknives, they proceeded to whittle and shave the roots. One was made flat and about three-fourths of an inch thick; the other was cut slim and round and sharpened at both ends. In one edge of the flat piece was cut a notch, and close to the notch was sunk a hole to fit one end of the slim piece. Then a small hand-piece with a socket for the other end of the drill was prepared by Byron, while Hal cut a section of a small green limb, two feet long, which with a thong made a bow.

All the material needed for starting a fire was

now ready save a supply of tinder. This was obtained by rubbing a piece of dry cedar on a rough boulder, producing a handful of easily lighted shreds. The notched piece of wood was now placed on a flat rock, the drill was inserted in place and the string of the bow looped tightly over it. Then the top-socket-piece was set on the other end for a handle, and the bow was drawn back and forth, the notched piece being held in place under the foot of the operator.

Hal Kenyon operated the device. The drill revolved rapidly in the socket, and presently a fine brown powder was flowing into the notch. In a few seconds this powder was smoking densely and slight fanning with a hat brought a flame.

Some of the tinder was now applied and after a little blowing, a tiny flame leaped up. The rest of the tinder was then applied, followed by some cedar bark and small wood. Pretty soon the fire was roaring and crackling, while the boys piled on more fuel.

"Now for our camp-fire yell," cried Hal when the last armful of fuel had been deposited on the burning heap. Immediately the cañon rang and

echoed with thirty young voices chanting the following:

"Camp-fire, rah!
Smoke-punk, ha!
Tinder, Lakefarm!
Rah — rah — rah!"

This yell was repeated several times until it seemed as if the rocks poised aloft would be shaken loose and come crashing down on the reckless Boy Scouts. Then the boys scattered again, each returning presently with another load of fuel, which was deposited near the blazing pile.

"Well done, my lads, well done," announced Dr. Byrd as the last load was dropped. "Now what are we going to do next?"

"Eat supper," replied Allie Atkins, with a slap of his hand on his hungry region.

"Of course; I almost forgot that," laughed the doctor. "I'm always forgetting my stomach. That's the reason I haven't dyspepsia. Always forget your stomachs, boys, until they remind you of their existence and you'll be all right in that spot. But what are we going to eat? Nothing left, is there?"

"How about the fish?" inquired Walter Hurst,

commonly known as "Pickles" because of his fondness for that table delicacy.

"That's right. This is just the time and place to cook them."

The suggestion was followed accordingly. The fish — two score of mountain trout — had been caught by the boys in the Rio Grande several miles to the east early in the morning. As they had enough other food for breakfast and dinner, their catch had been saved for the next morning's meal at the school.

Of course the doctor had not forgotten the fish when he asked the boys what they would eat for supper. But he always appeared to have a poor memory and few ideas when on a trip with his Scouts. He made it a rule to compel the boys to suggest and do every useful thing within their power.

So they prepared the meal on this occasion, as they had done on others. Fireplaces were constructed with stones, frying-pans were placed over them, and the fish were soon sputtering appetizingly. Fortunately, they still had a moderate supply of bread, butter, jam and coffee, so that all appetites were fairly well satisfied.

The pans and coffee pots and cups were washed in the dashing stream, the remains of the meal were cleared away, more fuel was thrown on the camp fire, and all gathered before it for the next number of the unprepared program. For a few minutes the boys chatted on the incidents of their three days' hike and exploration. Then one of them suggested:

"Let's tell stories."

A proposal of this kind under such circumstances is always favorably received by true Boy Scouts. There was a general note of approval, and Dr. Byrd inquired:

"Well, what shall it be first?"

"Flathead Mountain," suggested Pickles.

"Good!" exclaimed Frank Bowler.

"And have somebody slam somebody in the face," proposed Clayton White, the joker of the school. "That'll suit 'Bad.'"

Frank Bowler had been nicknamed "Bad" because he was continually talking about "clipping somebody on the jaw," or "slamming some one in the face," or "putting somebody to the bad."

"I'll push you one on the chin if you don't close

your face,'' growled '' Bad '' in an undertone to the last speaker.

Clayton only grinned. He was not at all afraid, as he was a year older than Frank and thought himself stronger.

'' Well, who has something more to add to the story of Flathead? '' inquired the owner of Lake-farm.

'' I have,'' replied Hal Kenyon.

'' Very well, Hal, we'll listen to you first,'' announced the doctor, and all became attentive with a readiness that indicated almost military training.

CHAPTER II

SOMETHING ABOUT DR. BYRD

It was well known how Mummy Cañon obtained its name. High up on the face of a bluff was a large rock, almost human in shape, in wrappings like a mummy. Mummy Cañon had not yet attracted the attention of sight-seers. No railroad ran near it, and only a rattling stage-coach line carried visitors between the nearest depot and the small settlement of Jamestown, or "Jimtown," as it was popularly called, near which Dr. Byrd had located his boys' school.

Dr. Byrd had served many years as a physician on English ships visiting the Orient, and, by both inheritance and good fortune, had become wealthy. When about fifty years old he found that the heat and dampness of the tropical climate were undermining his health and that he must heed the warnings of nature. So he returned home, but in London found that his throat still troubled him, and he decided that he most move elsewhere.

His children being grown and married, he and

his wife sold part of their personal effects and came to America. Then they traveled about a good deal, trying to find a climate that would promote better health for the doctor, but every place they visited proved unsatisfactory until they reached Colorado.

The altitude of this state, second highest of all the states of the Union, together with the atmospheric conditions, proved "just the thing." But where should they make their home? Denver was delightful as to climate, but the doctor was not contented there. He loved nature, to be out of doors; he had no patience with clanging street cars, smoking engines, and houses huddled together. So they began their search anew.

One day they stopped at Lake City and took a stage-coach ride over the La Garita Mountains. The vehicle was only a rattling two-seated open buggy, drawn by four horses that might have pulled a plow over any American field, but it was dignified with the name stage-coach. The driver was a young man who had a contract with the government for transporting mail to and from various mining points along the way, and he added to his

profits by carrying passengers and all manner of light freight.

Along the foot of the mountains they rode for several miles, then up a grade and around a spur of a perpendicular hill, up, up, up, winding here and there, overlooking deep gullies, dashing downgrade into a ragged valley, with its noisy brook; then up again and on and around they wound to where the pines stuck in the mountain sides like toothpicks.

In the course of this journey they passed through Mummy Cañon. But this gorge had not yet received its name, and when the imaginative Dr. Byrd beheld the "swathed form" on the face of a lofty bluff, he called attention to it.

"That's the mummy," said the driver in a matter-of-fact way.

"It looks just like an Egyptian mummy," declared the doctor. "Does everybody call it that?"

"Everybody around here does."

"What's the name of this cañon?"

"'Tain't got none. I s'pose it'll get a name one o' these days when more people settle 'round here."

"It's going to have one right now," announced the doctor. "Its name is Mummy Cañon. I call you two as witnesses of the christening."

"You'll have to stay here a while and tell everybody or the name won't stick," laughed Mrs. Byrd.

"And that's just what I'm going to do," was the surprising answer. "I'm going to make my home right near here — with your permission, of course, my dear. This is just the country I want to live in. It's good for my health. It's good for my eyes; I like to look at it."

That settled it. Mrs. Byrd was amiable and happy to live in any place where her husband's health could improve. Moreover, she, too, was delighted with the scenery and praised it almost as much as did the doctor.

But there were other features of special interest in the cañon. This part of the state had once been inhabited by the cliff-dwellers, prehistoric Pueblo Indians. Ruins of their early dwellings and defenses were to be found here and there, although usually they were in such dilapidated condition that it was difficult to make out their character except at close range.

The " mummy bluff " stood out high on the side of a most remarkable mountain, especially noticeable because of its shape. The sides looked unscalable and the top appeared to have been cut off clean and level with a monster knife, a few hundred feet lower than the neighboring lofty peaks. Before leaving the cañon, Dr. Byrd gave a name also to this mountain. He called it Flathead.

The doctor was well pleased with " Jimtown." In fact, he was pleased with everything now. The mining settlement was booming when he and Mrs. Byrd arrived. It was located close to the side of a mountain; a few of the houses, in fact, stood a short distance up on the steep slope. The place was so busy that nobody seemed to have time to notice the arrival of so humble a pair as a London physician and his wife, and they selected a site and built a home without attracting any particular attention.

The site was located near a pretty mountain-spring lake that fed a tributary of the Rio Grande. It was about three miles from Mummy Cañon. The scenery of course was beautiful, as it is in all of mountainous Colorado. The lake was clear

and cold. It rested in a pocket more than a hundred feet above a delightful valley and behind it was a range of tall, steep, snow-capped mountains. The outlet was down several natural terraces that converted the little river into a succession of dashing cascades before it reached the valley.

This place was several miles from "Jimtown," the nearest settlement. Dr. Byrd engaged servants and began the cultivation of a considerable farm. The beauty of the spot and the personality of the settlers soon attracted attention, and several others moved there and began the cultivation of farms. Before long a post office branch was opened and the stage-coach line ran two miles out of its way to deliver mail, groceries and general supplies.

Meanwhile the doctor made acquaintances rapidly. He was a most entertaining person to meet. He had traveled extensively and seemed to know the world. He had an excellent library and a magnificent collection of curios from many countries. Moreover, he had a delightful personality, tall, straight, athletic figure, kindly intelligent face, and a shock of curly iron-gray hair that commanded the admiration of all who saw it.

But the doctor's best friends were boys. And there was a reason for this. The boys whom he met always found in him a best friend. He knew all about them, their likes and dislikes, their sports and their hardships. He had a vivid recollection of his own boyhood days, and he could reel off yarns by the hour. Just put him into a company of youngsters and let him begin: "When I was a boy," and everybody was all attention in an instant. Of course there were not many boys living in the neighborhood of the new mountain home, but there were a good many in Jimtown, where the doctor soon became a familiar figure. And there was always company at "Lakefarm," as he had named the place, and the "company" always was urged to bring the boys along. Frequently they would remain at Lakefarm after the grown-ups had departed, and every summer the place became "a regular boy ranch," as one visitor called it.

Finally the doctor got so interested in "boyology" that he resolved to open a boys' school. Manual training had become quite the fashion in the making of young men all over the country and this appealed to the owner of Lakefarm. So he

let his ideas become known and was astonished as well as pleased at the indorsement they received.

Five years after settling at Lakefarm Dr. Byrd built a schoolhouse and a shop and a dormitory on his farm, engaged instructors and servants, and then announced that he was ready to receive pupils. It was surprising how rapidly the school was filled. In two weeks Dr. Byrd announced that he could receive no more, and the registry list was closed.

Most of the boys were of either wealthy or well-to-do parents. Naturally this was an almost necessary condition, as the tuition and living expenses at an institution of this kind were not the lowest. But to offset this, the doctor made arrangements for receiving a few pupils on nominal payments or free of charge. One of these poor boys was Hal Kenyon, whom Dr. Byrd found selling newspapers on a street corner in Denver. Hal proved to be such a bright lad that the owner of Lakefarm decided at once to do something for him. Hal's parents were willing and he went to school in the mountains.

Three successful and happy years had passed

since the opening of the school on Lakefarm. Meanwhile the settlement around the school grew until the census enumerator reported fifty families. Previously the town had been known as Byrd's Place, or just Byrd's, but now the subject of a permanent name arose and a meeting was called to settle the matter.

Flathead was the name selected. After this the name of the school was changed in the popular mind. Officially it bore the title of Lakefarm Institute, but soon it was spoken of frequently as Flathead School, while some humorously played on the idea suggested in the name and styled it the "School for Level-headed Boys."

This latter pleased Dr. Byrd very well, for it expressed his purpose in a few words, to develop in his pupils a liberal supply of common sense.

CHAPTER III

A FALL FROM THE AIR

That was the history of Mummy Cañon, Flathead Mountain and Lakefarm Institute. The mountain was partly visible from the school. On their return to the farm from Mummy Cañon the Boy Scouts would have to walk on through the cañon, past old Flathead, and up the stream that came dashing noisily down from Lakefarm and joined Flathead River north of the big gorge.

The peakless mountain was located near the lower end of the cañon, and it was from a bluff on the mountain side that the "mummy" stood forth. Before the sun went down the Scouts could see the outlines of this freak of nature from their position at the camp fire, but as it sank beneath the high horizon and the cañon grew dark, both the bluff and the "mummy" were lost to view. But presently the moon rose over Old Flathead.

Under such circumstances Hal Kenyon began his legend of the cañon, relating it as follows:

"Flathead Mountain was once a giant. He

was the biggest giant that ever lived. His name wasn't Flathead then. His head ran up to a peak, and the people called him Sugar Loaf.

"But his heart was made of stone, the hardest kind, and his brains were all up in the peak of his head. And those brains didn't amount to much, for they had such a small place to rest in that they were squeezed into half their natural size.

"And since he didn't have much brains and his heart was made of stone, he was a cruel giant. He did all kinds of mean things. He killed and ate all the boys he could lay his hands on. There weren't any Boy Scouts in those days, or they'd have gone out and killed him."

"I'd have clouted him in the jaw," interrupted Frank Bowler energetically. "Just one good swift punch on the chin — "

"Yes, you would, Bad," jeered Pickles; "you're all the time talking about clouting somebody — but you never do."

"I don't, eh? "

"Come, come, boys," warned the doctor. "That's not very dignified talk for a Boy Scout, Frank. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It's silly. Go ahead, Harry. We'll let Frank

tell us how he would have licked the giant after you've finished."

"Well," continued Hal, "I was going to tell how a boy like Bad did clout the giant in the face, or something worse, but he interrupted me. You see it was this way. A good many years ago, a boy called Smash lived near here. That was before the giant lost his peak. Smash went around smashing everybody in the face. The giant met him in the woods one day and nodded his head at him and said hello.

"'Come off the heap; don't talk to me,'" jeered Smash. 'I'll lay my mit on your mouth.'

"'Ho, ho, ho!' laughed the giant. 'You're the conceitedest kid that ever came to this cañon.'

"'Where's the best place to hit you?' asked Smash.

"'Right here on my ankle,' replied the giant. 'You can't reach any higher.'

"'Let me stand on your ear, and I'll give you a nailer,' said Smash.

"The giant picked Smash up with two fingers and stood him on his ear.

"'Now, let me have your axe,' said Smash.

"'What!' roared the giant.

"'Let me have your axe.'

"'Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!' laughed the giant. 'You couldn't get your arms around the handle.'

"'I can't, eh? Just give it to me and I'll knock your brains out.'

"'All right, you conceited kid,' said the giant. 'Here it is. Bust away.'

"He always carried his axe with him to cut firewood, and he gave it to the boy. Smash's fingers seemed suddenly to grow very long and very strong, for they seized the handle and lifted it up. Then, before the giant realized what was happening, Smash gave the axe a mighty swing and cut the top of his head off."

"Hurrah for Smash!" exclaimed Bad.

"Wait a minute," said Hal. "There's more coming and you won't be so happy over it."

"Did Smash fall off his ear?" inquired one of the boys.

"Good guess," replied Hal. "That's just what happened."

"Did he break his neck?" asked another.

"I don't know; but it was just as bad. He fell faster than the top of the giant's head and

the giant's brains spilt on top of him and drownded him."

"*Drowned* him, you mean," corrected Mr. Porter. But the correction was not noticed. The boys were loudly expressing their opinions of the story. Some liked it; others were displeased.

"Served him right for having the big-head," declared Joe Moffett wisely.

"You bet it did," agreed Vincent Pyle.

"Didn't either," shouted Frank Bowler. "That's a crazy story. You can't tell me. Why, do you think a boy who could stand on a giant's ear and cut off the top of his head with a axe as big as forty trees would get in such a scrape?"

"No," replied several. "Yes," declared others.

"You're crazy," said Bad, addressing the latter. "Why, he'd 'a' fell in the giant's pocket, or caught hold o' one of his whiskers, or hung onto his watch chain."

"That's a good argument," pronounced Dr. Byrd. "What have you to say to it, Hal?"

"Bad's wrong," replied the story teller.

"I want you boys to quit calling Frank 'Bad,'"

said the doctor sternly. "He isn't bad at all. He's just extravagant in his talk."

"I don't care what they call me," declared Frank, who was rather proud of his nickname.

"Just so we don't call you down, eh?" Pickles amended.

"If you do, I'll clean you up."

Pickles was smaller than Bad and did not resent this threat. The doctor did not regard Frank's talk very seriously and so did not remonstrate. He remembered similar experiences of his own and believed that hard knocks are a much better cure than constant preaching for the brag and bluff of a boy.

"Where 'd you get that story?" inquired Byron Bowler, Bad's one-year-older brother. "Make it up yourself?"

"No, Pepper helped me," replied Hal. Pepperill Humphrey was an old servant of the doctor's who had traveled with him much and followed his employer soon after the latter settled in Colorado. He was an interesting character, one of those old-style family servants who had grown up with the families for whom they worked.

"We worked it out together," continued Hal.

"Did you put me in it or did Pepper?" inquired Frank.

"I didn't know you were in it," replied Hal with a mischievous grin plainly visible in the firelight.

"Oh, Smarty! You know what I mean. You meant Smash for me."

"I put Smash in the story, yes; but you never did any such things as he did."

Hal and Frank were very good friends, and Hal knew better than to take seriously Bad's "fierce" attitude. He liked his warlike friend best when he was threatening to "clean somebody up." There was something amusing about him when he was making one of his idle threats.

"Now, who's going to tell us a story about the mummy?" inquired Mr. Frankland.

"I have one on *that* if nobody else has," announced Dr. Byrd.

"Tell it," cried several of the boys eagerly.

"It isn't very long," said the doctor; "but it fits in well with Hal's story. The giant, by the way, had water on the brain: that's why Smash was drowned.

"Well, Smash, by the way, was an Indian.

And he had a brother whose name was Rash. This brother was continually doing the most outlandish things and performing the most wonderful feats. After the top of the giant's head was cut off and his brains gone, the giant died. But as he was very stockily built, he did not fall over, but continued to stand there. Trees and bushes and grass and flowers grew all over and he became a mountain.

"Now, Rash was a witness of the death of Smash. He was sailing above in an airship — "

"What!"

"In an airship!"

"Yes, why not?" he replied.

"Who ever heard of Indians having airships!" said Bad in tones of disgust.

"This Indian was a real inventor," explained Dr. Byrd. "But he kept the secrets of all his inventions to himself, so that when he died all his work died with him. When he saw the fearful accident that had befallen his brother, he glided down to offer assistance. The giant was dead, although standing erect; but Smash had disappeared, all but one foot. That was sticking out from under the hollow peak of the giant's head,

which had fallen over the boy and caged him in.

" Rash alighted and attempted to turn the peak over; but although he was very strong, he was unable to do this. So he flew away, and a few days later he returned with several other Indians. With the aid of some tree trunks for levers they elevated one side of the peak-prison and pulled out the body of the prisoner.

" The brain of the giant proved to have been a most remarkable substance. It had a strong odor of spices and chemicals and had converted Smash's body into a mummy. The flesh was becoming hard as stone and it was evident that no decay could follow.

" Although Rash was a reckless and daring fellow, he had not the great fault that had brought Smash to a sad end. He appreciated the danger of such a nature and desired to warn all others against a like fate. So he wrapped the body in cloths, as some of the Indian tribes have done, and saturated the cloths with diluted giant's brain to preserve them. Then he put the body on his airship and arose to the giant's forehead, and landed with his burden on a beetling eyebrow. There he hewed out a shallow niche, into

which he set the mummified Smash and cemented him fast; and on the giant's forehead he remains to-day as a warning not only to boys who are continually threatening to clean some one up, but also to giants who may be so foolish as to put great power into the hands of boastful youths."

Everybody except Frank applauded this story. After the handclapping and shouts of glee had subsided, Bad remarked disdainfully:

"That story's all bunk. The mummy on the mountain's as big as a elephant. How could it have been a boy?"

"Oh, those Indians were giants themselves, though they weren't anything like as big as Flathead," exclaimed Dr. Byrd.

At this moment all were startled by a most remarkable noise. It was a heavy whirring sound and came from overhead. Instinctively they all looked up and beheld in the moonlight a very strange object. But, strange though it was, every one of the boys recognized its nature almost immediately.

"It's an airship," cried one.

"An aeroplane," shouted another.

"He's volplaning," exclaimed Dr. Byrd in

startled tones. "I wonder what he means. He can't be going to land here."

"He seems to be in trouble," said Mr. Frankland. "Yes, he's coming down."

"Look out, everybody!" shouted Dr. Byrd. "No telling where he'll land."

There was no need of a second warning. Evidently the aviator was losing control of his machine. It acted as if one wing had been clipped. Suddenly, within fifty feet of the ground, the aeroplane plunged and fell with a crash and a thud less than a hundred feet from the camp fire.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRECK AND THE AVIATOR

For some moments all was commotion. The appearance of the aeroplane in that out-of-the-way place and at such a time had been so unexpected as to create no little confusion, but when it plunged to earth almost in the very midst of the camping Scouts, there was general panic, accompanied by a few screams of fright.

Every boy, as well as the doctor and the two instructors, ran for cover as the warning was sounded, but few of them found a satisfactory place before the aeroplane struck. Luckily nobody was hit, and soon they gathered around the wreck in true Boy Scout readiness to help the injured.

Fortunately the aviator had not been caught under the wreckage. He had managed to jump clear of his machine before it struck the earth, so that his body was not mangled. But he lay still as death, and there was little doubt in the minds of the campers that the fall had been fatal.

Dr. Byrd was soon kneeling over the unconscious form and examining it for signs of life. Two of the boys pulled burning brands from the fire and held them close to afford him light. The examination occupied several minutes, and finally the doctor announced:

"He's alive, but he's got some broken bones. One of you boys get some water. Some of you make some splints, and some make a coat litter."

In a moment all was activity. Thirty boys cannot work together to great advantage under ordinary circumstances, but these boys were well trained and well managed. They were organized in Patrols with Patrol Leaders, while the two instructors acted as Scout Masters. All of them, even Bad, had learned to obey orders, and the work moved along quickly.

Pickles went to the stream and got some water in a coffee pot, and Hal led a company into a clump of cottonwood near by to cut some splints, while others busied themselves with the preparing of the litter.

The splints were made of small green limbs cut from some of the trees and shaved flat on two sides with the boys' strong jackknives. In a

short time Hal and his followers were back on the scene of the accident, watching proceedings eagerly and waiting for further orders. Meanwhile the work on the litter progressed with equal rapidity. Two strong poles were cut, trimmed and thrust through the arms of two of the boys' coats. Then the fronts were drawn around over the poles and buttoned, and the task was finished.

Dr. Byrd was a surgeon as well as a physician and he worked rapidly. He laid the injured man flat on his back, with head low, opened his clothing to aid respiration, then bared the injured parts and bathed them with water. In a few minutes the man groaned, and it was evident that he was in great pain. A further examination disclosed the fact that his right leg and two ribs on his right side were broken.

Dr. Byrd did not set the leg at once. He merely straightened the limb and bound it with handkerchiefs and pieces of torn garments so as to make it firm at the broken point. Around the broken ribs he pinned a wide bandage.

"You boys are now having your first lesson in the treatment of a victim of a serious accident," remarked the doctor after he had finished his

work. "Sometime one of you may be in a position where you'll have to set a broken bone, and it will be well for you all to make note of everything connected with this case. First, never set a bone when the flesh around the fracture is swollen. Treat it to reduce the swelling, and then set it. This man's wounds are badly swollen because of the violence of his fall. I have bound them so that they will not be irritated while he is being carried to Lakefarm. Now, we'll put him on the litter and start. But first put out the fire."

The boys quickly obeyed, for they had been taught never to leave a camp fire unattended in a place where there was a possibility of the blaze reaching woods or prairie grass. There was little danger in this instance, but the doctor insisted on following the rule. Water was carried in pails and pots and pans from the stream and poured on the fire until the last spark was gone. Then the camping utensils were gathered up and the journey toward the school was resumed.

Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter carried the injured man, and Dr. Byrd walked beside the litter and kept watch over the patient. The latter had said little thus far, for the doctor had instructed

him to lie still and not try to tell his story, as he evidently wished to do.

The aviator was about thirty years old, and one look into his pain-drawn face was enough to inspire confidence and deep sympathy. He was not particularly handsome but he looked pleasant and straightforward. His body seemed well-knit and powerful.

"I'll give you boys a half holiday to-morrow morning," announced the doctor as they started up the cañon toward Flat Head Pass. "You may come back here and get the wreck of the airship and bring it back to the school."

This announcement delighted the young Scouts, who expressed their glee variously. The prospect of making a thorough examination of an aeroplane with such a history as this, was enough to excite their imaginations.

As they proceeded, the doctor gave the boys further instructions regarding the care of an injured person. He called their attention to the manner in which the man on the stretcher was being carried in order that he might ride with the greatest possible care and comfort.

"Notice how Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter are

walking," he said. "They break their step so that while one moves his right leg the other moves his left and vice versa. This makes an easy pace. By walking in this manner, Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter carry the patient along gently and without jarring."

It was after ten o'clock when they arrived at the school. The aviator was taken into the "Hospital," put into bed and made as comfortable as possible. The boys went to their dormitory, visited the shower baths and then turned in.

Next morning, in spite of their late retirement, the boys were up bright and early. Several of them had dreamed of airships and awoke in the midst of various tragic situations. Hal Kenyon narrowly escaped being hit by the wing of a falling biplane and awoke as the machine struck the ground with a crash. Those who were slow at waking were pulled out of bed by their more eager schoolmates or were driven out of slumberland with showers of pillows. But they were not angry in the least at this rough awakening and made all possible haste to prepare for breakfast.

There were few servants at the "Level-Headed School." Dr. Byrd did not permit any of the boys

to wear expensive clothes, even on Sunday. For the week days he had selected the Boy Scout uniforms, which were worn constantly. This uniform, in fact, was what attracted him to the Boy Scout idea.

In the absence of a corps of servants, the young Scouts learned to perform many useful duties. They aired their own rooms and made their own beds, sewed on their own buttons, and, in shifts, helped the cook to prepare their meals.

So they had various "chores" to perform both before and after breakfast on the morning following their "hike" in the mountains. For an hour and a half they were busy, sandwiching their breakfast between the tidying of the dormitory and the washing and wiping of dishes. But finally all such duties were done, and the boys were free to go to Mummy Cañon for the wrecked aeroplane.

Meanwhile they had been told that the victim of the accident was not fatally injured. Aside from his broken ribs and leg he had suffered only a severe shaking up. A thorough examination had convinced the doctor that he would recover as soon as his broken bones could mend. The swelling on his leg was rapidly going down, and the

doctor announced that he would probably set the limb in the afternoon.

A team of horses was hitched to a wagon, and one of the boys got in and drove, while the rest walked ahead or behind. Mr. Frankland accompanied them. The journey was uneventful and in less than an hour they were in the cañon.

The aeroplane was so thoroughly a wreck as to require almost an expert to determine what it had been originally. It had struck on a level grassy spot and had torn up the sod as if to make the earth as much a wreck as itself. A misshapen mass of splintered wood and bent struts and braces was about all that the Scouts could make out.

"It's hardly worth while to take that junk back with us," said Mr. Frankland as he gazed on the sorry-looking heap. "But since we came after it we may as well obey orders. Perhaps he'll want to hold a funeral and bury his dead pet."

"Who is he?" inquired Ferdinand Sharer, commonly known as "Fes" because of his fondness of carving or inking his initials, "F. E. S.," on all his personal property. "What's his name?"

"I don't know," Mr. Frankland replied. "He hasn't done much talking yet."

"Gee! such a fall as that's enough to shut anybody up," exclaimed Frank Bowler.

"Yes, anybody except you," answered "Fes" wisely. "You never close your face till after the chickens go to roost."

"I don't, eh!" began Frank; but Mr. Frankland put a stop to this sort of dispute by saying:

"Tut, tut, boys. None of that. That isn't clever."

Several of the boys now took hold of the wreck and lifted it into the wagon. It was a strange looking sight as they carted it over the rock road.

They arrived back at Lakefarm earlier than they had expected, but the boys were not required to return to their class work until afternoon. The wreck of the aeroplane was stored away in an empty shed, and the incident was closed pending an explanation from the injured aviator.

CHAPTER V

LOST!

Next day Dr. Byrd related an aeroplane story to the boys in the assembly room. It was the story of Mr. Johnson Miles, the aviator who lay on a bed in the "Hospital" striving to help mend his broken bones by thinking hopeful thoughts. It was a story of absorbing interest to the young Scouts and afforded material for much excited conversation for several days thereafter.

Mr. Miles had related his experiences in detail. He said that his home was in Indianapolis and that he had flown all the way from that city in his aeroplane. He had already spent several weeks among and over the mountains, his purpose being to visit the Rockies as a bird would visit them, and to collect specimens.

"I was on my way to Flathead Mountain when I fell almost at its base," he told the doctor. "It was moonlight and I thought I would fly awhile, as it is really mighty pleasant to sail through the air with the moon and stars overhead. It's like

racing along a lonely road in an automobile and seeing a ghost behind every post."

"You have an odd idea of enjoyment," remarked the doctor.

"Oh, it's thrilling," declared the aviator. "The ghosts can't catch you in an automobile, and you just cut right through them in the air.

"But I was forced to stay up longer than I wanted to. The country was so rough that I could find no place to land. Then I found my gasoline almost gone and I knew I must glide and take my chances. The engine began to jerk and sputter and gasp, warning me of immediate danger.

"That was a bad miscalculation I made regarding my gasoline. I thought I had enough to last me several hours. I had intended to fly only an hour or two by moonlight. I was right over the mountains when I discovered the condition of my gasoline, and you can imagine the state of mind it threw me into. All the ghosts I had cut through in the air hadn't begun to chill me the way this did. Fifty thousand icicles stuck down my back wouldn't have been a circumstance to this.

"It was so dark down on the earth, in spite of the moon, that I could hardly distinguish mountains from valleys. I was flying five hundred feet over the highest peaks, and began to glide as soon as I discovered my predicament.

"Presently I saw a large gulch that you call Mummy Cañon right below me. So I banked and circled around without realizing that I was so near the mountain I was searching for. But when about fifty feet from the ground a couple of my stay wires broke and warped the left wing. I worked my ailerons in an endeavor to balance the machine, but it was no use. Down she flopped, and I leaped. I don't know how I managed to get clear of the struts and the planes, but I did, and — well, it was mighty lucky you folks were near, or I'd have died a lonely death. Probably nobody would've come that way until I was food for the crows."

"What became of your specimens?" inquired the doctor. "Didn't you have any with you, or hadn't you gathered any yet?"

"Oh, my, yes!" replied Miles. "I'd been in the mountains several weeks. Didn't you find them?"

"No. Where did you drop them?"

"They were in a leather bag tied to one of the struts near my seat. It's mighty funny you didn't find them."

"Maybe the bag was broken loose when the machine struck the ground, and was thrown some distance away," suggested the doctor.

"That might be, but I should think one of all those boys would have found it when they went after the aeroplane."

"Yes, I should think so, too, unless it fell into a hole or behind a big rock. Were the contents of the bag valuable?"

"I wouldn't have taken one thousand dollars for them," said the aviator sadly. "In fact, I regret their loss more than the wreck of the biplane."

"We'll make a thorough search for them," assured the doctor as he left his patient.

This conversation took place shortly before noon. After dinner the boys were instructed to meet in the assembly room. There the doctor retold Mr. Miles' story in detail and then said:

"I'm going to give you another half holiday, boys —"

"Hooray!" exclaimed Ferdinand Sharer in a loud whisper.

"Hold on, Ferdinand. Shut off your enthusiasm, for this isn't going to be an occasion of play. You have a very serious duty to perform, and I want you to go about it seriously."

"We will," assured several of the boys.

"Yes, I know you intend to be serious," said the owner of Lake-farm, with a wise shake of his iron-gray locks. "But I want you to be more than serious. I want you to use your wits, too, a little. A treasure has been lost and I want you to go in search of it; and if you don't find it, I want you to furnish a clew as to what has become of it."

Dr. Byrd's Boy Scouts could no longer contain themselves. Most of them just had to give vent to their feelings with loud whispered "hoorays!" or other characteristic expressions of glee.

"Remember, now," insisted the master of the school just before he instructed the troop of Scouts to file out: "I want you to use your heads and do some good work. That box or relics is valuable and must be found. If it isn't lying on

the ground near the place where the aeroplane struck, I want to know why. Mr. Porter will go with you."

This was rather a large task to impose on any number of boys. To be sure, if the bag were lying near the spot in question, they ought to find it, or rather they should have discovered it already; but if it had mysteriously disappeared, how were thirty boys to conjure an explanation of the mystery?

Naturally this question, variously phrased, occurred to a number of the Scouts as they listened to the doctor's latest words, but they were too young to ponder very deeply over the difficulty of any problem and soon dismissed this one from their minds.

"You may stay until dark if it takes that long to find it," concluded Dr. Byrd. "Now, everybody go to the kitchen and get some sandwiches that you'll find all ready. You'll all be hungry before you get back."

There was no need of further urging. The boys filed eagerly out of the room, hastened to their lockers and got their drab coats, drill hats, haversacks, and hike-sticks, and then went to the

kitchen for their sandwiches. In twenty minutes they were on their way.

The course from the school to Mummy Cañon is pretty and interesting. It follows the bed of the river most of the way. This stream, named Lake River by Dr. Byrd, varies from thirty to forty feet wide and carries considerable volume of water. It runs southward a mile and a half along the foothills, then turns westward after receiving the water of Flathead River from Mummy Cañon. The rest of the way is up-hill, along the bank of the latter river or near it.

Mummy Cañon is more than two miles long, its greatest width, near the center, being nearly half a mile. It is almost entirely hemmed in by mountains, there being a narrow pass at either end, north and south. Flathead River has its source, or sources, high up in the mountains, and dashes down in a series of noisy cascades and cataracts, making a graceful curve for a quarter of a mile along the base of Flathead Mountain, from there leaping down a very rocky course to and through the northern pass.

The young Scouts and Mr. Porter walked halfway through the cañon before they reached the

place where the aeroplane struck the earth. To the west arose Flathead Mountain, considerably lower than the other mountains bordering the cañon. From the "forehead" of Flathead the mummy stood forth conspicuously. The bottom of the cañon was strewn with bowlders of every size and description. On the east, exactly opposite Flathead, was a steep ascent so rocky as to permit of little vegetation save a pine or fir here and there growing from a crevice that seemed not to contain a trace of soil. High up on the ascent were poised several huge bowlders, and hence its name of Bowlder Mountain.

On a level and treeless spot several acres in extent between Flathead and Bowlder Mountain, the Boy Scouts and Mr. Porter began their search for the missing bag of specimens. Almost in the middle of the grassy plot, the soil had been torn and rooted up by the plunging machine, and it did not take the searchers long to decide that the object they sought was not there in the open.

"Well, what do you think of it, boys?" inquired Mr. Porter. "Remember, you're to do all the work and furnish all the ideas. Who has an idea now?"

"I have," announced Fes Sharer.

"All right. We'll listen to Ferdinand first."

"I think this is all a pipe dream of the airship man's," declared Fes, who was an extremely practical youth and always demanded evidence before he would believe anything. "I think he struck his head on a rock and hasn't come to his senses yet."

"Don't you believe he had a bag of souvenirs?" inquired the instructor.

"Naw," was the skeptical answer. "If he did, what became of it? It'd had to fall with the airship."

"Yes, if it was tied to it," conditioned Juan Del Mar.

"He says it was tied to the aeroplane," reminded Mr. Porter.

"I think he's dreaming," insisted Fes. "If he had a bag of specimens with him, it wasn't tied to the airship; or if it was, it broke loose or came untied while it was falling."

"I think it came untied," declared Pickles.

"What do the rest of you think?" inquired Mr. Porter.

As any thought on the subject must be largely

a matter of guess, none of the boys besides Fes and Pickles were inclined to be very positive. All, however, were willing to accept Ferdinand's explanation.

"Then it's up to us to search the whole cañon, or a good piece of it, around here," declared Hal Kenyon.

Several others agreed with him, although a few of the more doubtful said they were just as ready to believe that the bag had been dropped outside of the cañon.

"I bet it dropped right on the peak of Bowlder Mountain, or maybe on the top of Flathead," one boy even declared.

It was now half past three o'clock, and as it would be dark early in the cañon, the boys set to work diligently to cover as much ground as possible before daylight failed them. They divided up the territory, and each boy tried to confine his search to his assignment.

Hal had a stretch of several acres along the creek at the base of Flathead Mountain. In the course of an hour he went over it thoroughly, without finding the treasured bag and hearing no joyful cry of discovery from any of the other boys.

Meanwhile it occurred to him that the bag might just as well have fallen into the river as any other place, and he determined to search in the water also.

This required a good deal of time. In some of the wider places the stream was shallow and he could see the stony or pebbly bottom. But in other places he found it necessary to exercise greater care. He took off his shoes and stockings and rolled up his trousers as high as he could; then he waded in and began a thorough search. Where the water was too deep for wading, he used his hike-stick to feel the bottom.

In the meantime other boys, to whom had been assigned other sections along the creek, observed what Hal was doing and followed his example. The search went along quietly, for all of the Scouts were too widely separated to engage in much conversation. When they became hungry, they ate their sandwiches and drank spring water and then returned to their work.

But at last it grew too dark for further hunting among the rocks, trees and bushes, or even in the open, and Mr. Porter called them together. The search seemed to have been in vain. The leather

bag of the aviator was still lost, and nobody believed that it would ever be found, unless by accident.

"Well, we did our best anyway," said Byron Bowler.

"You bet we did, Bun," agreed Pickles, following the general boy habit of shortening Byron to "Bun." "I'm tired."

"So'm I," declared several others.

"We'll start home now," announced Mr. Porter. "Everybody here?"

"All here," replied one of the boys, assuming that everybody had answered Mr. Porter's whistle.

The walk back to Lakefarm was quiet. The boys were all tired and found little of interest to discuss in their fruitless search. On the campus they were met by Dr. Byrd and Mr. Frankland, who inquired as to their success.

"Nothing doing," replied Roy Hendricks. "We searched pretty near the whole cañon and come back with empty hands."

"Yes, and we searched the river, too," reported Bun. "Hal Kenyon started that. We waded through the shallow places."

"Where is Hal?" inquired Pickles. "I ain't seen him all the way back."

There was no answer.

"What's that?" inquired the doctor. "Kenyon missing? Hal, step forward."

There was no answer and no stepping forward. All was excitement soon. Hal's name was called, then shouted by a dozen throats, and still no reply.

Young Kenyon had disappeared as mysteriously as had the bag of specimens of the injured aviator.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCREAM IN THE WATERFALL

"How did this happen, Mr. Porter?" demanded Dr. Byrd sternly, yet with an unmistakable quaver in his voice.

"I — I don't know, sir," stammered the manual training instructor. "I thought I heard his voice among the others on the way home."

The fact was, Mr. Porter thought no such thing. He was merely frightened lest he be held responsible if anything serious had happened to Kenyon while the boy was in his charge. He felt guilty. He knew that he ought to have called the roll to determine if all were present before starting back for the school.

"Did anybody see Hal or hear his voice on the way back?" called out the doctor addressing the crowd of boys now gathered closely around him. No one had.

"Maybe he's gone into the dining-room," suggested Mr. Porter in an unnatural tone.

"No, he didn't do anything of the sort," re-

turned the doctor. "I've been sitting out here for ten minutes waiting for you. Not a boy has entered this building in that time."

There was an uncomfortable silence for a few moments, and then the doctor continued:

"If anything has happened to that boy I'm going to find out who's responsible."

"He was working in the river some o' the time and it's over his head, lots of places," piped one small boy in fearful accents.

"Oh, it's impossible for him to have been drowned," declared Mr. Porter. "I kept my eyes on the boys in the river all the time they were there."

Dr. Byrd offered no reply to this assurance. He merely said:

"All you boys go in and get your supper; then go to bed early."

"Can't we go with you and hunt for Hal?" pleaded Charley Mason.

"No. I'm not going to run any risk of losing any more of you. Besides, you've done enough for one day. I know you're all tired."

"No we're not," responded several. The fact is, they were well tired from their afternoon's

work, but love for their lost schoolmate had a refreshing effect. But the master of the school would not yield and they were forced to do as he said.

By this time Mr. Frankland had appeared, and as the boys filed into the wash room to prepare for supper, he was informed of the situation that had caused such a commotion.

"We've got to go and look for that boy and stick to the hunt until we find him — dead or alive," almost sobbed the doctor.

"Oh, it can't be as bad as that," reassured the hopeful Mr. Frankland. "Hal's a pretty level-headed boy and will be showing up with an explanation before long. I haven't known him to get into trouble yet, and nearly every other boy in the school has been in one sort of scrape or another?"

"I hope you're right, Frankland, but I very much fear otherwise. I can't conceive of an explanation of his disappearance unless some serious accident has befallen him. But you go and find Pepper and have him get the auto ready, Mr. Porter; and, Mr. Frankland, you get a couple of long handled rakes and some lanterns. I'll get

my medical and surgical cases and we'll be prepared for any emergency."

Pepper was soon found and instructed. A few words of explanation served to put speed in his actions, and in fifteen minutes the large touring car was backed out of the garage.

No unnecessary delay was permitted by the doctor. The medical and surgical cases were put aboard and all climbed in. Mr. Frankland, with two rakes in hand, sat behind with Mr. Porter, who had charge of the lanterns, and Dr. Byrd took a seat in front with the chauffeur.

Pepperill Humphrey served as chauffeur as well as janitor at Lakefarm Institute. He was a wise old man, always ready with "home-remedy" advice and droll humor. He could tell "bad boys" what was going to become of them more forebodingly, some said, than could any other forecaster of human events.

He was peculiarly quiet on the present occasion. After receiving a twenty-word explanation from Mr. Frankland, he asked one or two questions and then said nothing more. His silence might have been construed variously. He was fond of Hal, as was everybody else at the school, and possibly

he was stunned at the news received. But he was observed several times to nod his head vigorously and to mutter in a very positive manner.

The other members of the search party, however, were too much occupied with their own thoughts to ask for an explanation from the janitor-chauffeur. They rode along in silence for most of the way. The doctor had gained all the information that seemed obtainable. Mr. Porter, because of the criticism he had received, wished to draw as little attention to himself as possible, and Mr. Frankland appreciated the embarrassment of the situation.

There was a fairly good road from the school to the northern pass of the cañon, including a bridge over Lake River near its junction with Flathead River, which ran through the cañon, and along this they advanced close to the spot where the airship had struck. Here they stopped, and the search for Hal was started.

First they shouted his name again and again, permitting the echoes to die away after each shout; but no reply came. Then they lighted their lanterns, one for each, and started in pairs up and down the bank of the river.

Mr. Porter indicated the section of the stream along which Hal had conducted his hunt for Mr. Miles' bag of souvenirs, and it was from a middle point in this section that search for the missing boy began. For a few hundred feet here the water was deep and comparatively quiet; but above this calmer stretch was a succession of falls so noisy as to make it necessary to shout in order to be heard.

The largest and noisiest of these falls was the lowest one. Dr. Byrd and Mr. Porter went upstream as far as this cataract, and stood a short time gazing into the water. There was little comfort in the feelings that possessed them as they gazed. The falling water glittered in the yellow moonlight, seeming to shine forth with a million ghost eyes, and in the noise of that tumbling flood every now and then they heard a strange sharp sound that seemed to pierce them through.

Mr. Porter took hold of the doctor's sleeve and drew him away. They walked some distance down stream until their ordinary voices could be heard, and then Mr. Porter said:

"Let's not begin by raking the river. If he's

drowned, we can't do anything for him; but if he's injured, he needs our aid."

"Well, where would you suggest that we hunt first?" inquired the doctor.

"In the timber and thickets near the falls. He may have gone in there and got hurt."

"All right. We'll search every place you suggest before we rake the river."

Mr. Frankland and Pepper were now observed coming up along the shore, and the doctor and Mr. Porter waited for them.

After the four were reunited, Mr. Frankland said:

"We've covered the ground pretty well down there. Everything's open and fairly level. We measured the water with our rake, too, and it isn't over a boy's head any place, although it is swift as a millrace."

"If he's drowned, his body's probably in this deeper part near the falls," said Dr. Byrd. "We're going up in the timber and hunt there first, and then come back here if we don't find him."

"It might be just possible that he waded over to the other side and was hunting along the steep

base of old Flathead and fell in there," suggested Mr. Frankland.

"We'll hope not," returned the doctor; "but we'll follow that up after we've tried everything else."

The timber they now proceeded to search consisted principally of spruce, pines and cottonwood growing on a slope that ascended with the bed of the stream. The soil was fairly good here, being comparatively free from small stones and gravel, but there were numerous large bowlders and rocky projections that the search-party had to climb over or around.

They spent an hour and a half, walking, crawling and climbing over this difficult ground, flashing their lanterns into every hole or depression, and stopping every now and then to call Hal's name. At last, considerably disheartened, they returned to the bank of the river below the falls.

"Let's go down to the rapids and work up," suggested Mr. Porter. "He was working that way most of the time I think. I saw him down there and didn't see him up here."

This proposal was agreed upon, so they walked down stream two hundred yards from the largest

and lowest fall and began to work up. Two of the men held the lanterns, while the others thrust the long-handled rakes into the water and felt along the bank.

They pushed the rakes out as far as they could and drew them in many times. On several occasions they were almost certain they had found the body of the missing boy, but their discovery proved to be only a log or a tangled mass of sticks and weeds. Finally they worked up to the lower waterfall and then moved away from the roaring noise to a distance where they could hear each other talk.

"The only thing that seems to be left to do is to go to the other side and rake the river bed over there," remarked Mr. Frankland.

"Yes, and if he was drowned even on that side, it'll be just our luck not to find him," said Mr. Porter. "The body's probably drifted into midstream and may be down past the rapids."

"If we don't find him to-night, we'll come back again to-morrow and drag the river to its junction with Lake River," the doctor announced determinedly.

"There's something funny about them falls,"

remarked Pepper, who had been strangely silent during the whole of the search thus far.

"What's that?" inquired Mr. Porter, who was still nervous and easily drawn into almost any meaningless conversation.

"Don't you hear it?" explained the chauffeur. "That noise every little bit. Sounds like a scream coming right out of the water."

"Oh, that's natural enough," declared the manual training instructor. "It's a twist or eddy sucking into some crevice in the rocks."

"I don't believe it," insisted Pepper. "Many a time I've been here on Sunday afternoon and set here listenin' to them falls, an' never before heard that noise."

"What do you think it is — a ghost?" inquired Mr. Porter with an uneasy laugh.

"No, sir," replied the other indignantly. "But it's something 'at ought to be looked into. We're huntin' for a missin' boy, you know."

"There *is* something strange in that sound," put in Dr. Byrd at this point. "I wonder what it can be. Mr. Porter, your explanation doesn't satisfy me."

"Nor me either," said Mr. Frankland.

Just then another and louder scream came seemingly right out of the tumbling flood, thrilling fearfully every member of the boy-hunting party. For a few moments everybody present stood as if frozen to the ground; then Dr. Byrd sprang forward exclaiming:

"Come on; we've got to find out what that means."

CHAPTER VII

A BADLY FRIGHTENED BOY

"I told 'em so. I told 'em something would happen. I warned those boys they'd get into trouble if they didn't quit gettin' so gay. Hal isn't a gay one, but he can easy be a victim of a trick of one o' those careless, dare-devil kids."

Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter both heard Pepper mutter thus to himself as they followed the doctor toward the waterfall whence the scream of a human voice seemed to come, but they paid little attention to his words, for they knew his peculiarities and attached little importance to his grumbling. Nevertheless, Pepper believed all he said, and more. Only a few days earlier he had observed some of the boys engaged in tying the long grass across the path that led from the stables to the west timberland on Lakefarm. Then he lectured them, promising that they would come to no happy end.

"You boys will be the death of somebody one o' these fine days, and then you'll begin to do some

thinkin','' he declared, as he strode along, breaking with a strong kick each of the "trips" that the mischievous youngsters had prepared. "And you, Frank Bowler, are well nicknamed 'Bad.' If you don't end on the gallows, I'm dreamin'."

Frank seemed to be the leader in this escapade. He would have liked to have made a smart reply to this direful prophecy, but for once in his life he thought twice.

This was only one of many occasions of which the old Englishman took advantage to hand out his advice. He was really a good-hearted and well-intending fellow, and no doubt did some of the boys considerable good. But there were a few of the latter who couldn't "go the old geezer," and Frank Bowler was one of them.

Why it was, he could never tell; but Mr. Humphrey had a "feeling in his bones" that one of the mischief makers of the school was connected with the disappearance of Hal Kenyon. And this was what he meant when he muttered the words overheard by Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter. Although he was the one who called particular attention to the strange sound that seemed to issue from the waterfall, he did not regard it as seriously as did

the others. He was thinking more of certain boys back at the school than of the mystery close at hand. True, his wonder was aroused at the sound issuing from the cataract, but his reason would not permit him to connect that with the disappearance of Hal. He was wishing that he were now back at Lakefarm closeted with "some of those bad boys and sweating the truth out o' them."

"I'd get it out o' them, I'd get it out o' them," he told himself over and over again after the first thrill of awe at the shrill sound from the waterfall. "Whether there's anything serious happened to Hal or not, I believe some o' those boys know something about it. Wait till to-morrow morning, and I'll find out."

Pepper nodded his head and shook his fist determinedly as he spoke. He was talking vehemently now, articulating his words without reserve, for they had approached so near the noisy falls that he could not hear himself speak.

But he was interrupted by another scream from the cataract. This was no louder than the last preceding, but it was more thrilling, for they were closer. Every member of the searching party

would have declared that only a human throat could send forth such a sound.

They approached close to the cataract and gazed helplessly into the water. What could they do? It was a most astonishing and unfathomable mystery. All they could do was stand and look and listen.

Presently Dr. Byrd pulled a sleeve of each of his companions and motioned them to follow him.

They started down the stream again, but soon they were halted involuntarily by another wailing cry from the same source. Dr. Byrd did not turn back, however, but went on after a moment's hesitation. The others followed.

Beyond the reach of the deafening noise of the waterfall, the doctor stopped and began to discuss the affair with trembling, hollow voice, his face showing white in the rays of the lanterns. He was not frightened, but the circumstances were unusual enough to unstring his nerves.

The rest were similarly affected, even Pepper experiencing a weakening of his knees as a result of the last two screams.

"What in the world does that mean?" gasped the doctor. "There it goes again," as another

scream, somewhat fainter than the last two, reached their ears. "Can't one of you offer a possible explanation?"

"Maybe it's a mountain lion or a lynx," suggested Pepper. "You know there's said to be a few in the mountains around here."

"That's a brilliant idea," exclaimed Dr. Byrd enthusiastically, "or rather, it's a commonsense explanation that ought to have occurred to any blockhead. Hence, what are the rest of us? I feel better all of a sudden. But no! If it is a panther —"

He hesitated.

"What then?" inquired Mr. Frankland.

"It may explain, may it not, what became of Hal?" replied the doctor slowly.

"You mean that the beast killed him?" inquired Mr. Porter.

"Yes."

"No, no, that would have been impossible. Such a tragedy could not have escaped the notice of some of us. Moreover, there'd have been some traces left — blood, broken bushes, and maybe torn-up sod."

"Yes, that's true," admitted the doctor. "But

what's become of the boy? I'd face a hundred panthers to get Hal back safe. My! there's that scream again. It doesn't sound like a wild animal. It's almost human."

"If it's a panther or a lynx, where do you suppose it is?" inquired Mr. Frankland, addressing Pepper.

"In the rocks near the waterfall somewhere," replied Pepper.

"I should think we'd have seen him or have been able to locate him when we were up close," reasoned the doctor.

"It's too dark up there — the fall's right in the shadow of the mountain. And the noise o' the water confuses things so you can't tell just where the scream comes from."

"I can't believe any wild animal makes that noise, and I'm in favor of making further investigation," said Dr. Byrd.

"I'm with you on that," Mr. Frankland announced; "but before we proceed, I propose we arm ourselves against a possible encounter."

"How?" Mr. Porter asked.

"With clubs. Four of us ought to beat off a panther with good strong heavy sticks."

"It's a wise precaution," the doctor approved. "Let's get busy."

They proceeded to a near-by thicket and there found a number of young trees that suited their purpose admirably. Like the Boy Scouts, they too were supplied with large sharp jackknives, and in ten minutes each was armed with a club that seemed formidable enough to break the skull of a lion.

Then they turned again toward the cataract, advancing close to it and flashing their lanterns over the big tumble of water and the adjoining piles of rocks. But they discovered nothing that suggested an explanation of the mystery. The screams continued to come, seemingly from the fall, but it was ridiculous to believe that any living being, human or beast, could exist in that flood and, with clear, strong lungs, emit such wailing sounds of distress.

For fifteen minutes they watched and listened, while the cries continued to come at intervals of a minute or two. Finally, since the examination of the fall and the rocks near it produced no result, Dr. Byrd began to give all his attention to the cries themselves.

After close and careful listening he was certain he could distinguish a feature in the cries that had not attracted his notice before. He strained every nerve in order to catch the sounds more distinctly. Observing his attitude as he leaned forward and put his hand cup-shaped behind his ear, the other men followed his example and soon they too were certain they could make out a single word uttered by a human voice.

"Help!"

It seemed to come more clearly now and was repeated several times in rapid succession. The eager listeners turned to each other and nodded their heads significantly; then they listened again as the call was repeated. But only the one word could they make out.

"Where are you, Hal?"

Dr. Byrd shouted this answer to the appeal, but his voice was heavy, attuned almost to the noise of the waterfall, and could hardly have been heard by the person in distress. Then Mr. Frankland and Pepper measured the strength of their vocal organs against the noise of the cataract with little better result. But Mr. Porter had a high, shrill voice, and when he sang out with all his strength

"Oh, Hal, where are you?" there was a general feeling among them that the boy must have heard it. Then they listened again.

A reply was surely coming. It was not a single word, but several that issued from the waterfall this time. They seemed to come in the form of a sentence, but only one was heard distinctly enough to be recognized. That word was understood by all. It was "behind."

"Behind what?" was the question that naturally came to the minds of the listeners. But before they could conjecture an answer, there came a startling interruption that drove all thought of the mystery of the cataract momentarily from their minds.

Happening to turn his face away from the waterfall, the doctor beheld the dim outlines of a small human figure twenty feet away. Believing it to be Hal, he ran joyfully toward the boy and was followed by the other men. The object of their interest did not move. In a moment they were close to him and holding their lanterns before his face.

But the boy was not Hal. It was Frank Bowler, supposed to be back at Lakefarm and fast asleep

in the dormitory. And his countenance could hardly have been whiter if it had been coated with white enamel. Moreover, he was trembling as if he had seen a ghost.

"Frank, Frank, what is the matter? What does this mean?" cried Dr. Byrd; but he forgot that he was too near the cataract to carry on a conversation, and the boy did not understand him.

Just then there came another scream out of the roar of the waterfall, and Frank, the boastful, fell on his knees, shaking with terror.

CHAPTER VIII

HAL'S DISCOVERY

Meanwhile, what had become of Hal Kenyon? He had had a most remarkable adventure, and connected with it was an equally remarkable discovery.

During the search for the missing bag of specimens Hal and Frank Bowler worked in adjoining divisions of the territory that was being covered. As they finished the search on their divisions they met at the lower waterfall. They gazed a short while into the tumbling water and then moved down stream until they could hear each other's voices.

"I don't believe we'll find the bag," were Frank's first words. "I don't believe anybody'll ever find it. I bet it's in the deep part o' the river where you couldn't wade."

"Maybe it's on the other side," suggested Hal. "There's quite a little piece of ground over there along the river bank. It's pretty steep, but we could walk on it if we're careful."

"Let's go over there and hunt," Frank proposed.

"All right. Come on."

They continued on down the river to a wide shallow stony place, and there took off their shoes and waded over. Arrived on the opposite side, they put on their shoes again, and as they were doing this Hal said:

"It'll be getting dark before long and we don't want to have to walk along this steep place when we can't see plain. Let's go up to the other end, at the fall, and work down this way."

"All right," agreed Frank.

So they picked their way over stones and through bushes and patches of stunted fir trees, sometimes finding it necessary to hold onto a bush or a rock in order to keep from slipping or losing their balance and plunging into the river. But they reached the cataract and then halted again to look around them.

There was little more than standing-room for them at this point. This standing-room, however, was level and comfortable. It was close to the fall, which proved even more magnificent from this side than from the other. The rocks were piled

high and wonderfully poised, and the water fell from a lofty height and roared thunderously on the rocky bed in the deep basin below.

Both of the boys had a great desire to talk as they gazed on the beauty of this scenery, but the noise of the falls drowned out their voices. So they had to content themselves with gazing and pointing their fingers and nodding their heads eagerly. As they stood there they made a new and interesting discovery that caused them to forget their purpose in crossing the river.

At the near edge of the cataract the downpour of water was extremely thin, so that the boys could look behind. Hal's notice was first to be attracted to this peculiarity. Soon he was standing as close to the fall as he could get with safety and was gazing wonderingly into a cavernous space beyond.

Observing his attitude, Frank stopped near and looked over his shoulder. Then Hal put his lips close to his companion's ear and shouted:

"Bad, there's a cave back there!"

Frank nodded understandingly, and Hal continued in the same manner as before:

"Do you see that thing on the floor of the cave?

It looks like a leather bag. Maybe it's the one we're looking for."

"It can't be," Frank shouted in Hal's ear. "How would it get there?"

Kenyon pointed to a huge projecting rock just over their heads.

"It might have struck that and glanced off through the water," he replied.

Hal was now convinced that they had discovered the object of their search. His first impulse was to run back and inform Dr. Byrd, but a boyish ambition made him hesitate, and that hesitation was perhaps to be blamed for much of the trouble that followed. As he lingered, this thought came to him:

"Wouldn't it be glorious if we could get behind the waterfall, explore the cave, and come out and report our double discovery to the owner of Lake-farm and all the boys?" The idea was so tempting that he was unable to give it up. The ledge behind the fall was about nine feet from the edge of the flat rocky precipice on which they stood. Now, if he only had a plank nine or ten feet long, he could easily bridge the chasm and walk through

the thin spray of water right into this wonderful cave.

Instinctively he looked about him for something that would serve as a bridge, and what was his astonishment to discover the very article he was wishing for. Projecting from a thicket near by was the end of a piece of lumber. He went over and pulled and found it loose. It was a plank twelve inches wide and ten feet long.

"My!" was his exclamation, drowned by the waterfall. "We're not the first to find this place. Somebody else is using that cave for something and he's had this plank here to cross over on."

This certainly seemed to be the natural and only logical explanation of the presence of the heavy piece of lumber in the bushes. At least it would serve the desired purpose, and Hal prepared to thrust it across the chasm so that an end would rest on each ledge of rock.

Frank understood quickly what his companion had in mind and stood ready to help him. The plank was heavy, but Hal was strong, and with a well-calculated effort he placed it in position and kept his balance.

"Now you hold this end while I cross over."

he screamed into Frank's ear. "But don't you try to come over."

Frank nodded eagerly. He had no intention of obeying, but said nothing. He got down on his knees and placed his hands on the plank. There really was no need of this, but it was a natural request for Hal to make, as he would feel safer with a pair of hands steadying the unanchored bridge.

It was now dusk in the cañon and rapidly growing dark. Probably this is one reason why the doings of those two boys were not observed by any of the other members of the searching company. However, the view of most of them was shut off by the high bluffs and rocks near the waterfall and the rest were at a considerable distance away or in hollows or depressions or beyond growths of timber.

Hal stepped onto the plank and moved out over the chasm toward the thin spray and the cave beyond. Meanwhile Frank's brain was working rapidly. He was thinking of the glory that Hal was winning and he was losing. Why should they not share the glory alike? As soon as his companion reached the cave he also would cross on

the plank, walk right through the roaring waterfall and maybe carry back the coveted treasure in his own hands.

"Oh, wouldn't that be great!" he exclaimed exultingly. "How the other kids'd look at me. And if any of 'em got too fresh, I'd just clout 'em on the jaw."

Frank actually executed the vicious swing of "clouting" some youngster as he spoke. The result was thrilling, but not what the youthful terrorizer would have wished. He was half kneeling, half sitting in an awkward and cramping position, and as he swung his fist on an imaginary jaw, he lost his balance, and his feet slipped from under him.

One heel struck the plank violently, and over it tipped, then with a swing, slipped under the waterfall and was shot down into the chasm. And Bud almost went with it, but he caught himself at the edge of the precipice. For a moment he lay there and looked over. Then he remembered that. He was gone. He must have followed the plank into the whirling pool below.

In an ague of horror he crawled back a few yards and staggered to his feet; then with one

terrified look behind him, he started on a wild run along the steep shore, sobbing hysterically as he ran:

"Oh, my! Oh, my! I've killed Hal! I've killed Hal! Oh, what will I do? What will I do? I'll be hung, I know!"

He arrived at the place where they had crossed and dropped down and pulled off his shoes and stockings. As he was thus occupied he continued his fearful forebodings:

"Pepper said some of us bad boys'd end on the gallows, and I know he meant me. He could look right through me. I always felt it. He's the first one to call me 'Bad,' and then the kids did.

"Yes, I know I'll be hung if — no, I won't either. Nobody saw us. I won't tell. I'll keep it to myself, and nobody'll ever find out."

He crossed back to the other side and in the dusk saw the boys gathering a few hundred feet away. Mr. Porter had called them a few minutes before with a whistle blast, but Frank had not heard it.

Still resolved to guard his terrible secret, Frank hastened to join the other Scouts. Fortunately it was now almost dark and none of them could see his face plainly, or they would have noticed

how pale he was. As a rule he was talkative, but now he did not speak at all, except to give the shortest possible answers when addressed. One or two of the boys, observing his unusual manner, asked him what was the matter and he made no reply.

All the way back to the school he walked by himself, lagging a little behind much of the time, as if tired, in order that he might not be forced to talk. He was afraid to talk. It was all he could do to keep from crying.

By the time they reached the school he had lost his nerve and decided that he must tell somebody all about it. He could not bear to keep the secret any longer. But no suitable opportunity offered itself to speak to the doctor or Mr. Frankland. He might have taken one of the boys aside and told his story to him, but Frank could not remember one of his schoolmates whom he had not threatened to "clean up" or "clout in the jaw" at one time or another. Even Bun his brother, whom he had threatened with a "paste on the blinker" only the day before, might censure him and tell him he ought to be hanged or be sent to jail.

So Frank did not tell his story when his strong-

est impulse to sob it out possessed him. He went with the rest of the boys into the wash room and then into the dining room and ate his supper in silence. His face was not so pale now, but his peculiar manner was observed by several. However, it was thought that he was dejected, as were many others, over the fate of Hal Kenyon, and nobody embarrassed him with questions.

After supper the boys were sent off to bed. Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter usually had charge of this "good night" watch and slept in the dormitory, but on this occasion Mrs. Byrd and the matronly cook superintended affairs. Once or twice Frank almost yielded to an impulse to confide in the doctor's wife, but his general dislike for both girls and women held him back.

Frank and Byron slept together. Dr. Byrd had not spared his money in constructing the buildings of this mountain school, and for every two boys there was a separate room, neatly and comfortably fitted.

They were all outside rooms, with a window for each, all on the first floor, so that it would be easy for the boys to escape in case of fire.

Byron was tired and could hardly keep his eyes

open until he got into bed. He was so tired that he hardly noticed the unusual silence of his brother; or if he did, he attributed it to the same cause that made him sleepy. As for Frank, he never was more wide awake and had no idea of sleeping. He sat down on a chair and began to undress slowly, but there was a reason in his slowness. He was watching Bun constantly out of the corner of his eye and his nervousness was greatly relieved when he saw his brother fall into bed and to sleep almost instantly.

Then Frank stopped undressing and sat quietly for a few minutes watching the boy in bed. Soon the latter's heavy breathing announced that he was fast asleep, and the young watcher drew on his trousers again. He worked rapidly now, drawing on his stockings and shoes, and putting on his coat and hat. Then he moved toward the window, which was open in accordance with the health ideas of Dr. Byrd.

With another hasty glance at his slumbering brother, Frank put both legs over the window sill and dropped to the ground, a distance of only a few feet. Then, like a flash, he straightened up and ran over the lawn toward the road.

The moon was shining and the boy concealed his flight as much as possible by keeping under a row of balsam poplars along the east edge of the campus. After leaving the shadow of these, he found it necessary to break into the open, and he ran down the road toward the river with all his speed.

It was a wild-looking figure that raced along the trail toward Mummy Cañon that night. Half a mile from the school a small animal shot out from a clump of junipers and darted across his path just behind him. Believing it to be a wildcat, he doubled his speed, too much frightened to think of stopping, although his hat was whiffed off by the wind.

His hair was rather long and it was blown in disorder. Like a scary horse he shied at every large rock, dark hollow, or ghost-like stunted spruce or fir.

Up hill and down he ran, through ravine and along the precipice of a hollow known as "Baby Gorge." Colorado nights are cool, even in the summer, and he did not become overheated. A few times he was forced to stop and walk for want of breath, but as soon as he recovered, on he went

at the best speed he could make. He was a sturdy youngster and stood the test.

At last he reached Flathead Pass and hastened through, over a ledge of rock along the bank of the river. Another quarter of a mile, and he was able to see the lights of the lanterns of the hunters for the lost boy. On he ran, and as he neared the party ahead, he realized tremblingly that they were near the fatal waterfall. Now he began to wonder what he should do. He had had no plan in mind when he started out; all he could say to himself was that he must be present and watch the search. He did not intend to reveal himself, but wanted to be near when the body of Hal was taken out of the water.

Frank approached as near to the men by the waterfall as he thought safe. He stopped behind a clump of bushes and peered around to watch proceedings. Presently the doctor and his companions moved away from the cataract and stopped within a few feet of the bushes, and there the boy heard their excited discussion regarding the cries that seemed to issue from the falling water. Then he saw them cut a club for each and advance again toward the place of mystery.

The watching boy was intensely thrilled by what he had heard.

The suggestion that possibly the screams were those of a panther or a lynx added a new element of fear to the situation. But as he heard the strange sound repeated again and again, he dismissed all thought of a wild animal.

"It's Hal's ghost, I know; it can't be anything else," he chattered; and without knowing why, he left his place of concealment and started toward the waterfall. A dozen paces from the men he stopped, fearful of announcing his presence, yet half hoping he would be discovered. Just then Dr. Byrd turned and saw him.

CHAPTER IX

HAL A PRISONER

"Oh, he's dead! Hal's dead, and that's his ghost screaming!" moaned Frank Bowler as he writhed in mental agony at the feet of Dr. Byrd.

The latter stooped and lifted the boy gently to his feet. Then he took him by the hand and led him down stream beyond the noise of the waterfall.

"Nonsense, Frank. If that's his voice, he's alive and very lusty, and we're going to get him out as soon as we find out where he is. But what does all this mean?"

"No, no, that's his ghost; I know it is," insisted the boy still wildly. "Don't let them hang me, Dr. Byrd! Don't let them hang me! I won't do it any more."

"Won't do what any more?"

"Threaten to clout anybody on the jaw," sobbed Frank, who now for the first time that evening found it possible to shed tears, and they

came in a flood. But at last he found his voice between sobs and continued

"I kicked the plank and he fell down in the waterfall. He's drownded; I know it. I saw him fall. Please, doctor, don't let 'em hang me."

"Get that out of your mind, my boy," reassured Dr. Byrd. "Nobody's going to hang you, whatever you did. They don't hang boys of your age. But I don't understand you."

This reassurance that he was not in danger of the gallows gave the boy better control of himself and he was able to tell his story less hysterically. Through a series of pointed questions the doctor finally drew from him all the details regarding the discovery of the cave behind the cataract and Hal's attempt to get into it, and then he announced:

"Well, the mystery is explained at last. Don't worry, Frank. Hal isn't drowned. He's safe behind the waterfall and we'll get him out as soon as we can."

"But I saw him fall," insisted the boy, his eyes staring wide with wonder.

"No you didn't," replied the doctor. "It was your imagination that caused you to think you saw

him fall. He was probably on the ledge beyond the cataract and staggered as he stepped from the plank."

This was the true explanation, and takes us back to Hal when he was entrapped. He saw what his companion had done and attempted to reassure him that no serious damage, beyond the loss of the plank, had resulted; but Frank darted away in terror almost instantly.

Hal watched the fleeing boy with puzzled amusement at first. He could not understand why he should have run away so hurriedly. He did not know that Frank believed he had killed his friend, but supposed the impetuous lad was hastening away for assistance. However, it seemed strange that he should not have tried to tell Hal his intentions.

Having no fear as to the outcome of his adventure, Hal began to look about him. But the cave was dark, except close to the roaring water, and he was able to see but little. He was afraid to venture far back lest he step into a pit or over an underground precipice. So he decided to wait where he was until help arrived.

Presently his eyes fell again on the supposed

bag of souvenirs, and he stooped over and picked it up. Yes, there was no mistake about it; the object was a bag of soft leather and contained half a peck, seemingly of small stones or quartz. The string, run through a dozen eyes near the opening, was tied, and as it was too dark to see, he did not open it. Help would come to him in a few minutes and he would turn the bag over to Dr. Byrd for further inspection.

But help did not come in a few minutes. Half an hour passed and Hal began to wonder a little. He had reasoned out an explanation of Frank's sudden departure, so that had ceased to puzzle him. Frank was very impetuous, and undoubtedly had realized at once that it would be useless, on account of the noise of the waterfall, to attempt to talk with the prisoner, so he must have decided instantly that the only thing for him to do was to run for assistance before it became too dark.

But as the shades of the cañon grew heavy and no rescuers appeared, Hal became uneasy. Probably an hour had elapsed since he was trapped in this place, and he was becoming alarmed. What could have happened to Frank? Had he fallen into the river and — no, that could not be. Hal

had watched him until he passed the deep part and sat down near the fording place to pull off his shoes and stockings. Frank had crossed the river, no doubt.

Another half hour elapsed and the prisoner was ready to give up hope for the night. Something had happened to prevent Frank from carrying the news to Mr. Porter, or else it was deemed too dark to attempt a rescue at once. The west shore was pretty steep and a single misstep in the dark might plunge one into the water or onto the rocks, ten, fifteen or twenty feet below. Possibly some one had been sent back to the school for lanterns.

Several times he wished he had some matches in order that he might explore the cave and examine the contents of the leather bag, but Dr. Byrd never permitted his boys to carry any. The buildings of the school were lighted by a small electric plant connected with the shops, and they were heated with steam pipes and radiators, so that there was little call for the use of matches on the part of anybody at the school. Moreover, the doctor had absolutely forbidden the use of cigarettes at Lakefarm, and matches are very necessary to the habit.

The waterfall was almost as effective as a stone wall would have been in shutting from view the light of the moon in the cañon. However, from the point where he had crossed over on the plank he could look out and see dimly the shadowy contour of the mountain. Then, gazing upward at an angle, he could see a few stars shining dimly.

Hal spent some time gazing out through this opening. At first he looked for the approach of rescuers, but as time grew into more than an hour and nobody appeared, he continued to gaze because it was more pleasant to do so than to rest his eyes on the darkness of the cave.

Once only he yielded to an impulse to make an exploration of his prison. This he did because he had become extremely tired of standing in one position so long. Indeed, he was almost ready to pitch over into the falling water when he finally dropped to his hands and knees and began to feel about him.

The floor of the cave was fairly smooth, but so damp that his trousers and underclothing became wet to the skin at the knees in a short time. This, however, did not bother him, and he continued his exploration for several feet back.

Satisfied with this he arose to his feet and went through a few simple calisthenic exercises that he had learned at Lakefarm. This warmed him up and he returned to the edge of the cave. He would have been glad to lie down and sleep until morning, but the uncomfortable dampness of the floor and the fear of catching a bad cold caused him to remain erect.

How much longer he continued to stand and look out, principally at a handful of stars, he did not know. It was a monotonous occupation, and he found it wise to stand back several feet for fear lest, in a moment of dizziness or drowsiness, he lose his balance and pitch forward and down with the falling water. Suddenly, however, he became very wide awake and attentive, for several lights were approaching some distance down stream on the right shore.

Apparently they were lanterns. At once Hal surmised correctly who carried them and was certain that they were coming to his rescue. Probably Frank was with them, he further reasoned.

But when he saw the lights separate, two coming upstream and two going down, he was puzzled. What could this mean? Why did they not ford

the river at once and come up on the other side? Here was the only place to help him out of his prison.

He could see the lights of Dr. Byrd and Mr. Porter until they approached close to the cataract, when the falling water shut off his view of them. They remained out of his sight, however, for presently they walked down stream again, stopping near the rapids. The light of their lanterns made their forms fairly distinct.

Presently Hal saw the other two men from down stream rejoin them. He looked closely for a fifth member of the party, a boy, but was disappointed. As he observed the four now engaged in a seemingly puzzled discussion, the waterfall prisoner decided that it was time for him to do something to attract attention. Was it possible that they did not know where he was? The idea seemed ridiculous; and yet what other explanation of their manner and actions could be given?

So he let out a lusty scream, and then watched for its effect. Apparently it had none, so he gave another and another. The men continued their discussion, paying no attention to his cries. Hal guessed that the sound of his voice was drowned in

the noise of the waterfall. This conclusion threw him into despair. All sorts of direful forebodings now crowded his brain. Maybe Frank was drowned after all, and the searching party was looking for both of them. If this was true, they would drag Frank's body from the river, while he, Hal, would be left to starve to death behind the cataract because he was unable to make his presence known.

This fear set him almost wild, and he continued to utter scream after scream, until his throat became so irritated that he had to quit. Then he caught some of the falling water in his hand and drank it and his throat felt more comfortable.

Meanwhile the entire search party came upstream again and disappeared, remaining out of Hal's sight a long time. During the entire hour and a half that they spent in the timber, the boy kept up a succession of screams and cries for help. Naturally the uncertainty of the situation had a depressing effect on him, but he set his teeth and would not give up. Daylight surely would bring hope. But daylight was many hours off.

Finally Dr. Byrd and his companions returned within Hal's range of vision. He saw the lights

and the men move down the river, and watched them as they raked the bed of the stream along the shore, but could not make out what they were doing. He continued his cries for help; he pitched his voice in every possible key, instinctively realizing that certain keys were more readily drowned in the roar of the waterfall than others. Then followed the puzzled discussion over these cries, and it was not long before the boy knew that he had attracted attention.

He saw them approach the cataract again, then go back, engage in another discussion, cut some clubs in a thicket, and return once more to the waterfall. They passed beyond his vision, as on former occasions, and before long he caught Mr. Porter's shrill "Oh, Hal, where are you?"

"Behind the waterfall," replied the boy in his highest pitch. But he put most stress on the first word, which was the only one caught distinctly by the rescuers.

Then Hal witnessed the discovery of Frank, who was standing just within his range of vision. As the light of the lanterns was thrown on that frightened youth's face, Hal saw him fall down

before the doctor, who picked him up and led him down stream, while the others followed.

From this moment he watched proceedings with new sensations of wonder. He could see that Frank seemed to be telling something to the men. But they did not listen long to his story. They seemed suddenly to decide on a course of action; they walked farther down the stream to the fording place where two of them pulled off their shoes and waded across, still carrying the lanterns. One of them also took with him one of the rakes, which Hal supposed to be merely a long pole.

They reached the western bank and climbed up on the steep shore. Then they picked their way carefully toward the cataract. Hal was certain now he was about to be rescued. His cries for help were no longer needed, and he waited in silence.

The two men's progress along the difficult shore was slow, but finally they reached the flat rock close to the waterfall. By this time Hal could distinguish the features of the two men in the light of their lanterns and also observed that the "pole" carried by Pepper was a rake. The man with Pepper was Dr. Byrd.

On reaching the rock, the janitor-chauffeur hooked his lantern onto the rake and extended it toward the fall. Finding the thin section of the cataract, he thrust it through and Hal seized both lantern and rake eagerly.

Disengaging the light from the garden implement, Hal was about to pass the latter back when he caught sight of a piece of paper tied to it. He set the lantern down, broke the string around the paper, and spread out the latter close to the lantern, taking care lest he tear the wet note-book leaf. Then he read the following:

"Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter have gone back in the automobile for some planks to make a bridge. Can you make yourself comfortable in there until morning? Answer.

Dr. Byrd."

CHAPTER X

THE MYSTERY OF THE LEATHER BAG

After reading the doctor's note, Hal picked up the lantern and swung it around so as to get a wider view of the cave. He was able to see the wall at the other edge of the cataract, but was not sure of the depth of the cavern.

Then he set the lantern down again and searched his pockets until he found a piece of white paper and a pencil. For a few moments he cast about him for a hard, smooth surface on which to lay the paper, but the best he could find was the plain flat handle of his pocketknife. With this on his knee and bending close to the light of the lantern, Hal laboriously inscribed the following:

"I'm all right till morning. I'm going to explore the cave."

He tied this note to the rake and reached it back to Pepper. Then he waited for the answer he saw the doctor preparing. It came presently and was as follows:

"Be careful and don't fall into another trap.

We're going back to the other side. Maybe we'll try to get you before morning."

Hal saw the two men depart and then turned his attention to the dark depths of the cavern.

The floor was smooth, though irregular. The mouth opening upon the waterfall was about ten feet wide, but the passage narrowed somewhat further in. Here it made a sharp turn to the right, and Hal followed the passage a hundred feet, when he was stopped by a wall of earth and rocks. There was no further exploration to make, for this was the end of the cave.

Hal flashed his lantern all around and above, but could find nothing more of particular interest, except the general formation of the cave. He was not certain that he could see the ceiling. At one place particularly there seemed to be a black void above.

The right wall of this part of the cave slanted upward like the side of a steep hill. Moreover, this side was jagged and irregular, so that Hal was certain he could climb up some distance. The other side hung over like a huge cliff, slanting at the same angle.

"This looks like a big crevice in the rocks,"

mused the boy as he gazed up and around him. "I wish some more of the boys were here with lanterns. I'd like to hunt till I found something worth coming here for. It looks like a shame to have such an adventure as this and find nothing.

"Oh, yes," he suddenly remembered; "there's the bag of souvenirs. I haven't examined them yet. I'll go back and see what they are."

So he turned to the mouth of the cave and set the lantern down on the floor, while he stooped over and untied the string around the opening of the leather bag. Pulling it apart, Hal was soon fingering a curious collection of many sorts of stones and quartz, some of which shone brilliantly in the light of the lantern.

"My! they look as if they might be worth a fortune," exclaimed the boy as he picked up one after another and examined them eagerly, "for Mr. Miles said he wouldn't take a thousand dollars for them."

As he had nothing else to do, Hal continued to examine the curios for some time, becoming more and more impressed with their novelty. Some of them evidently had been altered in shape by the hand of man, particularly a few that looked like

Indian amulets, and Hal was convinced that the collector had visited some deserted pueblos or cliff houses.

"Dr. Byrd said Mr. Miles had spent some time in the mountains," he mused: "and I bet he can tell some interesting stories of the places he's been in. When he gets well enough to be around, I'm going to ask him to tell us all about his adventures. He must have had some with that airship in the mountains."

Hal's meditations and his interest in the contents of the leather bag were interrupted finally by the reappearance of lights approaching along the river bank. He drew the string tight around the receptacle and tied it. Then he awaited the approach of his rescuers.

As they came near, he saw that they were bearing two wide planks, one man at either end of each, the leaders carrying the lanterns. Evidently they had decided not to wait until morning before attempting to release the boy from his strange prison.

Finally they reached the flat rock near the waterfall and the two planks were laid across the intervening space between the shore and the cave. Hal

adjusted his end of the planks so that they rested firmly; then he picked up the leather bag and his lantern and walked across the bridge.

Without further delay, they turned and walked down the stream again. No attempt was made to discuss the affair until they had forded the river and returned to the stage road near which the automobile had been left. Hal was then the first to speak.

"Where's Frank?" he inquired.

"We took him back to the school and put him in bed," replied Mr. Frankland. "Evidently you could see and recognize him from behind the waterfall."

"Yes," answered the boy. Then he continued: "It wasn't his fault that I was trapped behind the fall. It was all an accident. He slipped and hit the board with his foot."

Hal's companions were amused at this unconscious charity toward Frank. If there had been light enough they probably would have winked at each other. In his fear of the gallows, the former youthful terrorizer had confessed just how he happened to kick the plank into the waterfall and, as he thought, dropped Hal to a fearful fate.

With little delay, except to crank the machine, they all got into the automobile and soon were bowling along the stage road. As they were leaving the cañon, Dr. Byrd inquired:

"What kind of place is that cave, Hal?"

The boy gave a brief description of it; then he added:

"It's a dandy. It isn't so awfully big, but it's big enough; and it's so different from most caves."

"You didn't find any rubies or garnets or streaks of gold there, did you?" inquired Mr. Frankland, nudging the boy, who sat beside him in the back seat.

"No, but there might be something of the kind. I wish we could go back with lots of lanterns and examine the place carefully."

"I think we'll forget all about that cave for a while at least," announced the doctor with an air of decision. "It came near proving a fatal discovery, and I feel like waiting until I've had time to get over this scare."

Hal had offered his suggestion rather doubtfully, for he felt that a scolding was due him and Frank for their boldness in crossing the river and

continuing their search along the steep shore on the west side. However, the adventure had proved successful, for the lost bag of specimens had been found; so the boy did not feel nearly so much like a culprit as he would have felt in the face of failure.

But the doctor said nothing more that might sound like criticism. He was too thankful for the discovery and rescue of the lost boy for that.

Presently the talk was changed to the bag of specimens. Naturally much wonder was felt because of the place where it had been found. Hal explained his theory that in falling from the aeroplane it had struck a slanting projection of rock and bounded into the cave.

"Of course that's barely possible," said Dr. Byrd; "but it's hardly probable. I can't get away from the belief that the bag did not break loose in the air."

"You think it fell to the ground with the aeroplane?" Hal inquired.

"Yes. Why not? I can't conceive what force could have broken or pulled it loose before the machine hit the ground. Did it just happen to

come untied from the strut at that time? Barely possible."

"How did it get into the cave then?" asked Mr. Porter.

"Somebody put it there if it didn't fall there," volunteered Pepper.

"Of course," said the doctor.

"Somebody *might* have put it in the cave," agreed Hal reflectively. "We weren't the first ones to discover the place."

"How do you know?" inquired Dr. Byrd quickly.

"By the plank we found in the bushes. It was there for a bridge, that was plain. Somebody's been using the cave for something."

Exclamations of surprise greeted this information.

"Did you find anything in the cave that tended to prove your suspicion?" asked Mr. Frankland.

"Nothing except the leather bag."

Hal hoped that his suggestions would arouse the interest of Dr. Byrd to such an extent that he would decide upon further investigation, but he was disappointed. If the owner of Lakefarm felt any such desire, he failed to express it.

On their arrival at the school, the automobile was run into the garage, and then a general move was made for their bedrooms. While the doctor explained matters to his wife, Hal and the two instructors had gone to bed.

The noise Hal made in entering the dormitory and walking along the hall awakened Bun Bowler, who was sleeping with his brother Frank. Eagerly Bun slipped out of bed and peeped through the slightly opened doorway.

"Oh, they've brought Hal back," he said to himself. "I wonder where they found him."

Had it been Frank he would have yelled out a congratulation, in spite of the lateness of the hour and the rule requiring quiet in the dormitory, but Byron crept quietly back into the bed. As he crawled over his brother — Frank always insisted on sleeping in front — the latter gave a start and a jerk and cried in a voice of terror:

"I won't do it any more! I won't do it any more! I won't threaten to clout anybody in the jaw — never, never again!"

CHAPTER XI

CONVINCING BAD.

The next day was one of rejoicing among the Boy Scouts of Lakefarm. If there had been any doubt concerning the popularity of Hal Kenyon, that doubt surely was gone now. The fact that his parents were poor made no difference with any of his schoolmates. Indeed, Dr. Byrd would not have permitted any feeling against Hal on this account. There would have been trouble instantly.

The news of Hal's return spread rapidly soon after sun up. It was communicated principally in the wash room, accompanied by a wild rumor of the manner in which he had been entrapped. Some one started a story that Hal had been a prisoner in a robbers' cave and was rescued only with much daring and danger. Frank's connection with the real adventure remained in darkness. Nobody, except Hal, Dr. Byrd, Mrs. Byrd, the two instructors, Pepper, and Frank himself, knew anything about it, and there had been a

general agreement that it was wisest to keep the matter secret.

Hal and Frank both slept late that morning. The doctor gave orders that they should not be awakened until they had "had their sleep out." While the others were eating breakfast, Mr. Frankland went to Frank's room and found the latter dressing. The boy's eyes were red and swollen from weeping. He searched the face of the instructor carefully, and then inquired with trembling voice:

"Did you find him, Mr. Frankland?"

"Certainly," replied the latter reassuringly.

"And did you get him out?"

"You bet we did."

"Alive?"

"Alive."

"And is he here — alive?"

"He surely is," declared Mr. Frankland, the smile on his face broadening.

Frank was so overcome with relief that for several minutes he was unable to continue his dressing. A stocking that he had been in the act of putting on dropped to the floor, and it seemed that he could not reach down and pick it up again.

He had been ready for this announcement, and yet it was hard for him to believe that it was true. He could not get rid of that picture of Hal falling with the water onto the rocks at the foot of the cataract. It was so real that only the sight of his friend standing before him would convince him that his eyes had not fooled him.

"Come, Frank; hurry up and get dressed, and I'll take you to Hal and show him to you," urged Mr. Frankland, still with a smile of amusement.

This promise renewed Frank's energy, and he picked up the stocking and pulled it on. Then he slipped on his shoes and announced that he was ready to call on his rescued schoolmate.

They stepped out into the hall and walked several doors toward the farther end. Hal's door was slightly ajar, and Mr. Frankland pushed it wide open and they walked in.

Hal was still asleep. Frank stepped forward, like one in a trance, and placed one hand on the face of the sleeper. Suddenly Hal's eyes opened wide and he sat up in bed. He recalled everything immediately, as his first words indicated:

"Hello, Bad; I'm all right. Why, what's the matter?"

And no wonder! Frank had fallen forward on the bed and buried his face in the counterpane. The relief of the truth was too much for him.

Mr. Frankland had not realized the tenseness of the nervous strain under which the boy was laboring, or he would have proceeded more carefully.

"Frank, what *is* the matter?" repeated Hal, himself half alarmed.

The other boy sobbed on for a minute or two, and Hal threw off the bed clothes and sat on the edge of the bed. Then he shifted his gaze from Frank to the instructor and back to the boy again.

But finally Frank got sufficient control of himself to choke down his sobs, and he arose and wiped his eyes with his fists and said:

"I——I thought sure you was dead, Hal. How—in the world did you get out?"

"Out o' where—the cave?" inquired the older boy.

"No, out o' the water."

"Out o' the water? I wasn't in the water."

"You wasn't?" Frank's eyes opened very wide again. He had been assured of this before, but it was as incredible from Hal. Still with a wonder-

ing look in his eyes and disbelief in his voice, he continued, putting one hand on his friend's left arm:

"Hal, I saw you fall. You went down, down. I saw you, oh, I did."

The other laughed outright. The laugh was so merry and hearty that presently Frank wasn't so sure of what he had seen as he thought he had been. Then Hal gave his delusion a further jar by saying:

"No you didn't do any such thing, Frank. I didn't fall at all. Is that what made you run away so fast? It was getting dark, you know, and maybe there was a shadow in the water that looked like me falling."

"That must have been it," declared Frank with a big sigh of relief. Then he laughed hysterically, for the picture in his memory had changed. Instead of a falling boy, he saw a shadow, or a dark-colored patch of water, in the tumbling flood.

That settled it. Frank recovered his nerve, but he was a much quieter boy for several days after. He was fourteen years old, his voice had already "changed," and he was begging permission from

his parents to wear long trousers on "dress" occasions; hence, it was no wonder that such an experience as he had recently gone through should convince him that it was about time for him to mend his ways.

Lakefarm was a comparatively tame place for several days following the happenings in Mummy Cañon. After the affair had been thoroughly discussed by the boys and nothing more of interest could be found, the subject was laid aside and picked up only now and then. The bag of specimens was returned to its owner and little more was heard concerning that for some time. But the aviator, Mr. Miles, continued to be of interest, for the boys looked eagerly forward to the time when his broken bones would be sufficiently mended to enable him to be among them and tell them stories of his adventures.

The summer program in the school was more of a vacation series of doings than anything else. Some book work and shop duties were required each week, but these were really a relief from the long succession of outings and excursions that filled the greater part of the summer program.

Among the favorite sports at the school were

baseball and swimming. The campus and the lake were therefore scenes of much activity in the warmer months. All things considered, it was a lively time the boys at Lakefarm school had the year round.

Because of these activities, the young Scouts looked forward with little interest toward vacation-time. Most of them spent the Christmas holidays at home, but few remained away from the school during the whole summer season. At the time of the beginning of these events, the vacation weeks were more than half gone, and the absentees were fast returning. A special program, including an excursion to the Grand Cañon of the Colorado River, was scheduled for the latter part of August and the early part of September, and most of the Scouts were expected to be present for this.

The boys of Lakefarm were skilled in mountain climbing. It was their experience in this line that emboldened Hal and Frank to hunt along the steep bank of Flathead River for the lost bag of specimens. However, Dr. Byrd's policy on all mountain climbing excursions was to avoid steep and dangerous places, and he felt that he had good reason to scold them for taking such a chance.

On the day following the imprisonment of Hal in the waterfall cave, the doctor summoned all the boys into the assembly room and lectured them. He told them he had thought his instructions from time to time in mountain climbing had impressed upon them sufficiently the importance of judgment in their excursions among the hills. Finally he wound up by saying:

"It seems that some of you boys need another lesson on this subject. So our next outing will be a mountain climb. We'll have to give you some more advice as to where to go and what places to avoid. As soon as the other boys get back we will go over and climb Porcupine Hill."

"And see Aunt Sarah Jane," whispered Pickles to Ferdinand loudly enough to be heard by all in the room.

Dr. Byrd smiled. He expected some such eager demonstration. Aunt Sarah Jane Turman was an aged woman who lived with her husband on the very peak of the mountain. Porcupine Hill was one of the lower mountains of the neighborhood, being just west of Flathead and affording the best view of the top of the latter. Aunt Sarah was an interesting character, a kind-hearted

nurse, ever thoughtful of the welfare of her friends and acquaintances. Most of the boys had been up there several times and every one of them adopted Mrs. Turman as his aunt on beholding her pleasant face and hearing her cheery voice and eating some of her "dandy" bread covered with a liberal supply of homemade jam.

So the doctor's lecture closed with anything but an unpleasant announcement, the fulfillment of which was to prove of considerable importance in the chain of events that made notable that summer at Lakefarm, Mummy Cañon and Flathead Mountain.

CHAPTER XII

AIRSHIP PLANS

The climb up Porcupine Hill was not made as soon as most of the boys had hoped. Several weeks elapsed and the program that had been mapped out by the doctor was too full for any additions. Meanwhile all the absent boys of the school returned, and the trip to Grand Cañon was taken.

Only one-fourth of the boys took this trip this year, it always being reserved for the fourth-year, or senior, pupils. Hal Kenyon was one of the eleven boys who visited these wonders of the Colorado River on this occasion. And on his return he was so full of the delights of the scenery that Mummy Cañon and Flathead were for a time of minor interest.

But in time their old fascination returned. The cave behind the waterfall at no time ceased to be an object of much interest to him, and he was continually wishing that something would put it into Dr. Byrd's head to make a thorough inspec-

tion of the cavern. And if this were done, Hal naturally hoped that he would be one of the inspectors.

Meanwhile the broken bones of Aviator Miles mended rapidly. As soon as it was deemed safe, he was permitted to leave his bed and hobble around on crutches, his leg still in a cast, however. From the time of his first exit from the Hospital, he was an object of much interest to the boys. They gathered around him at every opportunity and begged for stories of his experiences, and he usually had something of absorbing interest to tell.

He told them that he had been among the Rockies from Yellowstone National Park to the Grand Cañon for two months before his accident, and he exhibited before their eager eyes his collection of stones and quartz that Hal had discovered in the waterfall cave.

"But they're not all here," he remarked as he poured them out on a newspaper that he had spread on the lawn in front of Dr. Byrd's home. He was seated on the grass while a score of boys stood around in eager attention.

"Where are the others?" inquired Fes.

"I don't know," replied the aviator slowly. "There were six pretty fair sized gold nuggets in the bag when I fell; or they were there a few hours before, and I don't see how they could have disappeared."

"I didn't see any when I opened the bag in the cave."

Hal volunteered this information, but the sentence was finished with a different tone of voice from the tone at the beginning. In the midst of his statement he suddenly realized the importance to him of the disappearance of the nuggets, and a lump arose in his throat, so that he could hardly finish what he started to say.

Everybody noticed the change in Kenyon's voice, and all looked at him as if for an explanation. Conscious of his seeming self-betrayal and of the inquiring glances directed at him, he blushed with confusion. The aviator suspected at once that these were signs of guilt.

But Hal knew better and flashed back a look of scorn and indignation at his silent accusers. Recovering his natural tone, he said in a cool, measured voice:

"I don't know what became of those nuggets.

They certainly were not in the bag when I opened it."

Most of the boys believed in Hal and were convinced by this sturdy statement. Mr. Miles, however, was not convinced, although he did not like to hold any suspicion against a boy who had impressed him so well. But he saw nothing to be gained by embarrassing Kenyon at present.

"Well," he said; "this isn't the only mystery connected with the affair. I'm just as curious to know how the bag ever got into that cave."

"You think somebody put it there?" Hal inquired.

"Being an invalid and unable to get around very conveniently, I haven't been able to inspect the place yet. But from all descriptions received, I'm in need of more evidence to convince me that it bounced in there by accident. In the first place, I'm dead certain it fell to the ground with the aeroplane."

"Maybe the strut it was tied to was what broke and made you fall," suggested Hal.

"It wasn't a strut at all that broke. It was a couple of stay wires. The struts couldn't break

under any but the most extraordinary circumstances."

"Are you goin' to fix up your aeroplane again, or get a new one?" asked Hugh Messinger.

"Oh, nothing can be done with that pile of junk. You boys might as well burn the wood and tote the steel framework into your blacksmith shop."

"Are you going to quit flying?" asked Byron Bowler.

Mr. Miles looked with keen amusement at the last questioner and replied with a wink:

"Do I look like a quitter?"

He surely didn't, although forced to stop for several weeks with some broken bones. Miles was a sturdy, determined-looking man, with firm-set jaw and clear bright eye that gave no hint of hesitation.

"What you going to do? Buy another air ship?" Byron persisted.

"I've bought one already."

"You have!" eagerly exclaimed several of the boys. "Where is it?" one of them continued.

"It's on its way out here."

"Out here!"

This exclamation also came in chorus from half a dozen astonished Boy Scouts.

"Yes," answered the crippled aviator; "it's on its way out here. But it isn't put together ready to fly. It's in the knock-down. I'm going to give you boys the job of putting it together."

"Oh! — when will it be here?" asked one enthusiastic youngster.

"In a week. Dr. Byrd and I had several talks about the matter, and he's decided to let you boys have the job. I won't be strong enough to do much on it myself, but I'll be on hand and boss."

"What kind is it going to be?" asked Pickles. "Like the one you fell in?"

"Not exactly. It'll be a biplane, but a much better one than the Ozone."

"What's the Ozone?" inquired Ferdinand.

"That's the name of the biplane I fell in. The new one will carry two passengers besides the operator."

"Oh, ain't that fine!" cried Glen Juza. "It's just swell. And can we all have a ride?"

"Oh ho," laughed Miles. "I thought it would come to that. But it really isn't up to me to de-

cide. I might say yes, and Dr. Byrd might say no. He probably would."

Disappointed looks and expressions followed this prophecy. The doctor's pupils could just as well have predicted such an outlook without the assistance of older heads, but they were naturally optimistic.

"But don't be discouraged, boys," added the aviator. "Your time will come sooner or later. Maybe you'll be afraid to go up with me when you see the airship all finished. It—"

"Yes we will!" "I wouldn't!" "You don't know me!" were some of the brave interruptions.

"It won't look very safe," was the aviator's warning. "Pretty thin and flimsy."

"I don't care; I'll go up in anything you will," cried Frank Bowler, who had listened to the conversation in silence up to this time. He was gradually regaining his former nerve and bluster, but his voice did not yet have a natural ring.

"What will the new aeroplane look like?" asked Hal Kenyon.

Most of the boys by this time had spent their enthusiasm and settled down to quieter attention.

Seated on the grass, they waited eagerly for the answer to Kenyon's question. By this time a good crowd of boys had joined the audience.

"I may as well give you your first lesson in aeroplane building right now," began the aviator, shifting slightly to ease his crippled limb. "First, do you all know what a biplane is?"

"It's an airship," said one.

"No, it's an aeroplane," corrected another.

"What's the difference between a biplane and a monoplane?" interposed Mr. Miles.

This was a puzzler for most of the boys. After several had answered and flunked, Hal Kenyon spoke up:

"A monoplane has one plane, and a biplane has two planes."

"What is a plane?"

"A flat surface."

"Good," complimented Mr. Miles. "You know a little geometry. The planes are the wings of an aeroplane.

"Now, the aeroplane will be built on this plan: The part that will interest you boys most will be the cabin. As I said, it will carry two passengers comfortably besides the operator. And it is to

be so arranged with an automatically shifting weight that these passengers can move about without disturbing the balance of the ship.

"This will really be an airship. The ordinary aeroplane is not entitled to such a name, for it is merely a skeleton without any body. This vessel will have a real body, made mostly of aluminum, except the glass windows and ports. The front, or prow, will be blunt in accord with the latest ideas of air friction. The front and rear of this cabin will be supplied with flexible slides that may be slipped around to the sides, leaving the front and rear open. This will remove practically all resistance, except for perpendicular rods six inches apart, giving the cabin something of the appearance of a cage.

"In cold weather, or in high altitudes, these slides can be closed and the cabin warmed with a small alcohol stove. Otherwise there will be little remarkable about the ship. You will all be interested in such details as the motor and the steering and weather apparatus. You will learn all about the altitude barometer and the anemometer, or speed measurer. In other words, you

will absorb a lot of information on air navigation while putting this airship together."

"How about that weight?" Hal questioned as the instructor in aeronautics paused. "You say it shifts automatically. Can you explain that so we can understand how it keeps the ship from turning over?"

"I'll try. The floor is of a flexible material. As one walks here and there, it is pressed downward and by means of a delicate mechanical device, shifts a weight on a rod. The shifting of this weight alters the angle of the ailerons at the ends of the wings and prevents the machine from tipping out of balance. Understand?"

Blank looks on every face before him advised Mr. Miles that he had been too technical for the boys, so he added:

"You'll understand easily as you advance in the construction of the vessel. But possibly this may give you a hint of what I am driving at: Changing the angles of the ailerons has the same effect in an up-and down direction, as turning a boat's rudder has from side to side."

Still few of the boys understood what he meant, although Hal Kenyon and one or two others be-

lieved they did. Later, when he found an opportunity, Hal, with pencil and paper, made some drawings and studied over them and altered them until he was certain that he had a clear idea of the plan. Then he took his last drawing to Mr. Miles and explained it to him, and the aviator told him he was right.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "PAINTER"

A few days later the promised trip up Porcupine Hill was taken. An early start was made, the forty-four boys of the school, clad in semi-warlike uniforms, looking like a company of young soldiers as they marched over the hills to the south and west toward the mountains on the right of Mummy Cañon.

Meanwhile Hal, by his frank and straightforward manner, established himself in the confidence of Miles so well as to remove all doubt as to his innocence regarding the disappearance of the nuggets. The mystery remained still unsolved, but it seemed certain that any suspicion directed toward Hal was entirely unjust.

Porcupine Hill was four miles from Lakefarm. The easiest ascent was on the southern side, but to reach this it would be necessary to travel an additional two miles around the base. On that side it was more than two miles to the peak, and this was the course generally used by those dwell-

ing on the peak and the side of the mountain. On the opposite side the ascent was shorter and much steeper, and this was the route taken by the boys whenever they went up to see Aunt Sarah Jane.

Mr. and Mrs. Turman were real uncle and aunt of two of the boys of the school, Byron and Frank Bowler. The aged couple were always glad to receive their two nephews and their friends, and took pains to make them feel welcome. Fifteen years before, while prospecting, they had discovered a vein of gold near the peak and had staked out claims. But finding gold on a mountain peak and mining it profitably are two different propositions, and they found it necessary to do some sharp engineering of various sorts.

A company was formed and incorporation papers taken out. Then followed negotiations with various moneyed interests and an entanglement that tied matters up. Since then nothing of importance had been done.

When he found that he was not going to make his fortune in the mine, "Uncle Sam," as Mr. Turman was familiarly known for miles around, desired to move to Jimtown or some other settle-

ment in the valley; but Aunt Sarah Jane had been cured of rheumatism in this high and dry altitude, and she was afraid it would come back if they moved below. So they continued to live on the mountain peak in their cabin of slabs and rude timbers made warmer in winter with banks of sod and straw heaped close and high around the foundation.

It was a picturesque place, with everything crude but neat, clean, and comfortable. The boys always enjoyed going up there. The view was wide and magnificent. Several towns were visible, nestled here and there in the valleys or on the hillsides. At night their lights shone prettily in the deep-down distance. On one occasion while some of the boys were on the peak, they witnessed a storm several hundred feet below them and marveled at the novelty of looking down upon banks of clouds with lightning flashing among them.

So the Boy Scouts had much of interest before them when one fine morning early in September they set out in a body to climb Porcupine Hill. The ascent began over a slowly rising ridge of ground that ran along the base of the mountain, then led directly up the steep incline for some

distance, and finally lost itself in a winding trail that curved among and about rocks and bushes and projecting cliffs. The climb, because of its winding nature, was much longer than a straight course would have been, so that nearly two hours were spent between the base and peak.

The boys were equipped with luncheons, water canteens, hike-sticks, a few cameras and field-glasses. For climbing footgear, they wore heavy Swiss hob-nailed shoes and gaiters. Their clothes were of strong, coarse material that would stand much wear and resist the tearing pulls of shrubbery and briars.

Aunt Sarah Jane was delighted to see them. It was the first time all the Scouts of the school had been up there together. At noon she brought out some tablecloths and spread them on the grass and invited the boys to prepare their dinner picnic style. Hal and Byron took the burro belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Turman and rode halfway down the southern side to a neighbor's well and filled two large canvas bottles with water. These they hung over the burro's shoulders by a strap connecting them and then began their journey back up to the peak.

The mountain was thickly wooded on this side, but the surface was rough, and the trail consequently very winding. Only one of the boys rode at a time on the return trip; when one became tired, the one on the burro dismounted and permitted the other to ride.

In this manner they had gone half of the return distance, when suddenly something happened that added a new sensation to their mountain experiences. Just as they were rounding a bluff in a sparsely wooded spot, a dark object darted across their path, causing the burro to give a jump so sudden as to throw Byron from its back.

Like an arrow from a bow, the slow and sleepy beast shot up the side of the mountain, leaving the boys to the tender mercies of the cause of its fright. At first the two Scouts were only astonished, for they could not imagine any more dangerous animal in that locality than a wildcat. There were said to be a few of these in the mountains, but they were shy and fled at the sight of man.

This beast, however, was larger than a wildcat and did not seem to be disposed to run at the sight of the boys. It was a slender long-limbed, cat-

like animal, with reddish-gray fur. After springing across the path, the beast turned and seemed to hesitate, as if not knowing whether to pursue the burro or to direct its attention toward the boys.

"What is it?" Byron asked as he clung tremblingly to his companion. He had been severely shaken by his fall, but not seriously injured.

"It's a mountain lion," replied Hal with all the steadiness of voice he could command. Being older and larger than Byron, he felt that the responsibility of the situation rested on him.

"Let's run," proposed the smaller boy, tugging at Hal's sleeve.

"No, we mustn't do that," replied the latter. "If we stand still and don't seem to be afraid, he may go away and leave us alone."

Hal now had good reason to congratulate himself on his industry during his three years at Lakefarm. He had found much of interest in the doctor's library, reading everything that appealed to his taste. Among the books that he most enjoyed were illustrated natural histories, and it is little wonder that he recognized now the kind of beast before him, although he had never be-

fore seen one. He remembered also that these books had informed him that mountain lions are not so fierce as commonly thought, that they usually hunt at night and are cowardly and little to be feared unless cornered.

The puma was only a few rods away from Hal and Byron, who stood close to the bluff that formed a turning point in the path. For more than a minute boys and beast stood facing each other, neither moving. Byron wished to run and continued to pull at his companion's coat-sleeve, but Hal, relying on his book information, stood firm. Presently the beast backed away.

"See? What did I tell you?" exclaimed the older boy gleefully. But his exultation was somewhat hysterical, indicating the strain he had undergone.

The puma backed slowly at first, but presently his retreat became more rapid. Then suddenly he turned and, with a few bounds, disappeared among the pine trees.

Hal was now willing to run, and both boys started out at their best pace up the trail. The ascent was not very steep here, so they ran some distance before they were too tired to go farther.

Then they stopped and looked back, and, seeing no sign of the lion, they rested a while.

Then they took things a little easier, but they went faster than they would have under ordinary circumstances. A short distance from the top of the mountain, they were met by all the other boys, Dr. Byrd, Mr. Frankland, Mr. Porter, and Mr. and Mrs. Turman, who were much excited. The burro had returned alone and with more speed than it had ever been known to make before Naturally this caused alarm, and a general rush was made to investigate.

Hal and Byron excitedly explained what had happened. Then followed a rapid succession of questions and answers until all the details of the adventure were told. Finally Aunt Sarah Jane added a new element of interest by saying:

"Maybe it was the painter I saw over on Flathead one day. It was early in the morning and I saw some kind of animal moving about over there. But it was so far away I couldn't make out what it was. I thought at first it was a man."

CHAPTER XIV

BUILDING THE AIRSHIP

Fortunately the waterbottles had been well saddled on the burro, and it carried them safely to the top of the mountain, in spite of its wild flight from the lion. Everything now being ready, the troop of Scouts returned to where the luncheon had been spread and sat around and ate. Of course the lion was the chief subject of conversation at the dinner. Mr. and Mrs. Turman both declared they were surprised at its appearance, as they had not heard of any of its kind in that part of the country for several years. Naturally, too, the statement of Mrs. Turman that she had seen a moving object that might have been a man on top of Flathead directed some interest toward that mountain.

"It seemed to be walking erect like a man," she said in reply to further questions; "but it might 'ave been the painter. I couldn't make sure what it was. I wish I'd had a pair of glasses like some of you boys have."

"I've heard it said that there's some cliff-dwellers' houses over on that mountain," volunteered Uncle Sam. "I don't know where the story came from, for there's nobody around here now that's ever been up there. I don't see how anybody could climb that mountain."

"Let's examine it with our glasses," suggested Byron, who had a pair slung over his shoulder.

Half a dozen binoculars were quickly rushing, and the holders were soon searching the singular upheaval of stones and earth more than a mile to the east.

"I see something that looks like some houses right in the side of the mountain," announced Byron.

"Oh, yes, there are some cliff houses," replied Mr. Turnum. "There's a big hollow place right in the side of the mountain about thirty feet up. There's a regular cliff there, and you can see where pieces of wood were driven in to make a ladder to climb up."

"Is that so?" Dr. Byrd exclaimed in surprise. "I never knew that."

"Yes; there's no road or trail along that side

of the mountain and hardly anybody ever goes near it."

"Well! This is a surprise to me," declared the doctor. "I thought I knew this country pretty thoroughly, but it seems that a very important feature has escaped me."

Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter knew just as little, and the faculty of the school at once decided that a trip of investigation should be made in the near future.

A search of the plateau, or mesa, on Flathead, with the aid of the glasses, produced little result of special interest. The doctor expressed considerable surprise on finding it so large. There was a patch of timber on the farther half, while the nearer half was made up of several hills and ravines and a few rocky elevations and bluffs.

"I'd give a good deal to get up there and examine that mesa," said Dr. Byrd. "We might find something interesting. There's a glittering spot near the middle that looks as if it might be water shining in the sunlight."

"I know how we can get up there," Hal announced with sudden eagerness. Everybody turned toward him.

"How?" asked Pickles.

"In Mr. Miles' airship when it's finished."

"That's a brilliant idea," laughed the doctor. "Well, Hal, if anybody besides Mr. Miles himself makes that trip, you ought to be allowed to."

"Can I?" Kenyon asked eagerly.

"No, of course not. I was only joking. Really, I'd like to see you all make the trip, but you know it's out of the question."

Three hours were spent by the Scout company on the top of the mountain. They visited the shafts that had been sunk by the aged miner and heard him tell of how wealthy he might have become had it not been for people who schemed against him. They traveled over every foot of the wooded peak, making note of curious formations and conditions and gaining much information.

Then they set out on their return, making the descent a little to the west of their ascent. During all their stay on the mountain and their return to Lakefarm they kept a keen lookout for the panther, but saw nothing of it.

"When Mr. Miles gets well and his new airship is finished, maybe he'll hunt the mountain

lion like an eagle," suggested Hal to several of the boys on the way down.

"My! wouldn't it be great if we could go with him," said Lee Huff with explosive enthusiasm.

"If they don't chain me to the earth, I don't see how I'll keep from running off with the airship," said Frank Bowler.

"Yes, you'd do wonders, you would," Pickles sniffed.

"He'd likely turn acrobat and tumble into the cañon," Hal suggested.

"Then he'd be stuck up on Flathead for another mummy," chuckled Ferdinand.

"Aw! close your face or I'll clip you one," Frank snapped, a little provoked. He was forgetting his voluntary promise not to make any more such rash threats. If Dr. Byrd had heard this threat, doubtless Bad would have been reminded of his resolution.

They arrived at the school without further incident, and next day the aviator listened to a chorus of stories of their experiences on the mountain.

When the suggestion was repeated that he

hunt the mountain lion in his new airship as soon as it was finished, Mr. Miles replied:

"That's a good idea and I promise you I'll follow it."

But the sportsmen of the town were not content to sit idly by and wait for an injured stranger to recover, build an aeroplane, and carry off such rare game, together with all honors. No sooner did they hear of the presence of a puma in the neighborhood than hunting parties began to form and to scour the mountains in search of the big cat.

Several days went by but the results were uniformly unsatisfactory, for no trace of the puma was discovered. The boys of the school desired to take part in the search, but Dr. Byrd would not grant permission. He did not regard it safe for so many boys to be at large in the mountains with guns, and no guns were kept at the school. They would have been glad to take part in the hunt with clubs and bows and arrows, for they were skilled in the use of the latter, but the doctor did not take kindly to this suggestion either.

Meanwhile the parts of the new airship arrived at the school. They were carefully crated and

were conveyed over the government road from the nearest railroad station in two wagons. It was a day of much excitement when they arrived, interest in the mountain lion being almost entirely eclipsed.

Then the work of putting together the parts of the novel aeroplane began. Perhaps forty-four boys never before worked so industriously. There was little use of expecting them to do much of anything else during the period and consequently Dr. Byrd wisely suspended temporarily the ordinary routine of the school. The institution was transformed into an airship factory for several days, the work progressing slowly in order that a thorough study of aviation might be made along with the mechanical construction.

Finally the task was completed, and a temporary hangar was put up at one corner of the campus. In fact this structure was the last, or finishing shop of the factory, for it was here that the final preparations for flying were made.

Mr. Miles was able to walk with the leg that had been broken, but he still used a crutch, and did little but superintend the job. One morning the new air vessel was wheeled out of the hangar

and onto the campus, and as the forty-four Boy Scouts circled around and gazed upon the result of their work, a ringing cheer of triumph awoke the echoes of the distant hills.

"Fly, Mr. Miles, fly!" yelled one youthful enthusiast.

"Not yet," replied the convalescent aviator. "Wait until these bones mend good and solid, and then I'll soar around those mountains like an eagle. I'll explore Flathead and I'll find the mountain lion too, if he hasn't left this part of the country."

CHAPTER XV

STOLEN WEALTH

There was special reason why Dr. Byrd should feel more than ordinary interest in Mr. Miles. Both of them had long been enthusiastic collectors of souvenirs and curios of many kinds, and it was not long after their first meeting that each of them discovered the similarity of their hobbies. They were together frequently thereafter, both in the hospital and out of it. They talked of the places they had visited and the sights they had seen and the curios they had collected until it seemed almost that they must have been companions in all their travels and all their hunts.

Then Dr. Byrd pulled out some of his trunks, opened them and disclosed a wealth of treasures such as caused the eyes of the aviator to stand out big with astonishment. This treasure was not so remarkable in money value, perhaps; but it was indeed wonderful in novelty and abundance.

An idea of the nature of this collection may be presented by a description of a few samples. One

of them was an oriental jewel casket of engraved rock and crystal mounted in enameled silver. Two other articles of special interest, because of their rarity, were a set of checkers made of sharks' vertebrae and an "eye" from an Egyptian mummy case. This eye was made of bronze and black and white marble.

A long chapter could be devoted to a description of the doctor's collection. As he exhibited them to Mr. Miles he handed over for inspection some Abalone pearls of California, blister pearls of Ceylon, a necklace of fluorescent amber from Sicily, jade ornaments, smoky quartz, Brazilian crystal balls, topaz from the Ural mountains, petrified wood, moss agate, rainbow agate, bloodstone from India, sardonyx from Uruguay, a Texan jasperized wood ornament, a jasper tray from the Ural mountains, fire opals, Norwegian sunstone, and an enameled talisman necklace.

Undoubtedly Dr. Byrd valued this collection much higher than a disinterested authority would have valued it, but there is little doubt also that it would have brought a considerable sum even at an auction sale. Nevertheless, the owner of Lake-farm could not throw off something of an air of

sadness as he was exhibiting his treasured gems and curios.

"Two years ago," he remarked to the aviator, "I could have shown you a collection that would have opened your eyes much wider. I then had a dozen other stones that were worth several times as much as all of these together, but they were stolen."

"Did a burglar break in?" asked Mr. Miles.

"No, I wouldn't feel so badly if they had gone in such manner. But it was a trusted employe that took them. He had been a teacher at the school for a year and I grew to like him exceedingly. He was really a brilliant fellow and I admired him. In fact, I gave him my full confidence. At the end of his year he resigned, and a few days later I discovered my loss."

"Couldn't you find him?" inquired Mr. Miles.

"Certainly. That's what made it so hard to prove anything against him. He was the smoothest kind, all nerve and calculation."

"How do you know he took them?"

"Didn't you ever know anything you couldn't prove?" replied the doctor slowly. "I knew who stole those gems the instant I found them missing.

Immediately I saw his excellent qualities in a new light. He was an extremely clever hypocrite."

"Did you meet him afterward?"

"No, I never saw him again. I put it up to the police. I told them of my suspicions, but couldn't give them any information that tended to fasten guilt on Maxwell any more than on anybody else."

"Maxwell was his name?"

"Yes. The police worked a while on the case, but gradually gave it up. Then I wrote to Maxwell and informed him plainly where my suspicion rested.

"He wrote a reply full of indignation and reproach, but it didn't ring true. I've noticed the smartest rascals seem to be unable to seem entirely innocent when they know they are suspected. It's a remarkable study, criminology. And yet, it's as simple as A-B-C."

"In what way?"

"Everything's simple when you understand it, I'm ready to believe. If we could learn the secret of the universe, we'd be astonished to find out what a simple proposition it is."

"You're getting pretty deep," smiled Miles.

"Perhaps I am. But I'm confident that the

effects of dishonesty on the dishonest person are similar to the effects of the use of an untrue square in the construction of a building. He absolutely can't help growing out of plumb. When you appreciate that rule, you will understand how I knew that Maxwell committed the theft."

It was months after the resignation of Rodney Maxwell before the boys of Lakefarm learned of the stealing of the gems, and then the information came to them in a vague manner. Pepperill Humphrey let the first hint drop, and the curiosity of the young Scouts would not let him alone until he revealed some more of his information. Pepper had many good qualities, but he was very talkative, and did not require much pumping to set him going in earnest, and soon the secret ceased to be a secret.

The conversations between the doctor and Mr. Miles on the subject of their collections led to a move highly pleasing to the Boy Scouts of Lakefarm. Dr. Byrd had several times expressed a desire to explore the cave behind the waterfall, where the aviator's lost bag of souvenirs had been found. To both of them this cave was a place of

some mystery, and naturally they felt considerable interest in a solution.

"I'd like to know how that bag got in there," said the doctor one day. "And the first step toward finding out must consist of an inspection of the cave and its immediate vicinity."

"I agree with you," returned Miles. "I'd like to go with you when you inspect the place, but it'll be a week or two before I can stand any vigorous exercise."

"It seems to me that you're entitled to accompany the first expedition of discovery," continued the doctor slowly. "But, as you say, you won't be able to move about in a lively manner for some time. Now, I have a plan. It's been working in my mind for several days, and I've about decided to put it into execution.

"It is this: Mummy Cañon is really a remarkable place. It's a wonder to me that it hasn't been exploited as a resort long before this. I'm seriously considering, Mr. Miles, a plan to purchase the whole of the cañon from the government and to enter on an extensive real estate project.

"Of course I'll incorporate, but I propose to retain a controlling interest in the stock company.

I'll buy the land, get out my incorporation papers, and then invite some eastern promoters here to look at my proposition.

"I'm dead sure the thing could be made a success. The D. and R. G. railroad is about to run a short line this way, and with a little advertising we'd soon have all the people out here we could take care of. A hotel, some cottages, and conveniences for sportsmen and sight-seers ought to start things humming.

"And the cave would be an important attraction. But it must be made accessible. So I have planned to give the boys a little experience in bridge and road engineering. I want to construct a foot bridge over the river near the rapids and dig a walk along the steep western bank right up to the cave. I would put up railings to make it safe and a well protected bridge from the bank through the fall into the cave."

"That's a great idea!" exclaimed Miles, enthusiastically slapping his sound leg. "When are you going to begin work?"

"In a day or two. I've so nearly decided to put the big scheme into operation that I've already begun action on the smaller one. The lumber for

the bridges and railing will be delivered at the cañon to-morrow."

"Good! I'm heartily in sympathy with the work. The boys will like it too."

"Oh, I've had the boys in mind all the time," declared the doctor warmly. "The young Scouts of Lakefarm, I intend, shall have much to do in the building up of Mummy Cañon. The work will be full of lessons in engineering, construction and business."

Of course the boys were delighted when they were informed of this plan. The doctor did not tell them of the larger scheme he had in view, as that was not yet fully decided upon.

A few days later work was begun. The lumber had been delivered at the shallow place near the head of the rapids, which was the place selected for bridge number one. The stream was wide at this place, but this width suited the purpose of Dr. Byrd the better, for he desired a task worthy of the efforts of forty-four energetic boys.

First, it was necessary to put in foundations for the abutments and supports of the bridge. This was done by gathering stones and bowlders and wedging them in place as securely as possible.

Then followed the task of sawing the timbers into proper lengths, according to plans that had been prepared under the supervision of Mr. Frankland and Mr. Porter. This done, the frame work was put up and the planks nailed down and the railings placed.

It was really a very satisfactory piece of work. First of all, it was stable and safe to walk upon. Second, it presented a neat appearance. Third, the boys had done it all themselves.

The bridge was finished in two working days. The doctor, in mapping out the program, provided for alternate days of work at the river and study at the school, so that three days elapsed before the bridge was completed. Then another day was spent at their books, after which the boys returned to the cañon and began making a level foot-path along the steep western bank of the river.

This was done in short shifts in order that the work might be pushed rapidly without fatigue. Half a dozen picks and shovels were kept swinging vigorously and the way the earth and stones went flying into the river said the work would soon be done.

Two weeks after the starting of the work on the

larger bridge the entire work was finished. There was a strong railing on the river side of the path and a narrow well-protected bridge through the waterfall to the cave behind. It was nearly night when the last nail was driven, and as they had no lanterns with them, it was decided not to explore the cave on this occasion, but to reserve this inspection for a special excursion on a later day.

That evening at Lakefarm, however, something happened that was destined to bring about a decided change in the program with reference to this plan. The person most affected was Hal Kenyon. It meant trouble for him and some extremely perilous adventures for some of the boys.

In the wash room Hal drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and as he did so something heavy and metalic hit the floor. Several of his schoolmates heard the sound, and Pickles sprang forward and picked up the object. As he did this, Hal also made a spring and attempted to snatch it away from Pickles.

The latter, however, with no uncivil intent, edged away, at the same time gazing eagerly at the small, heavy object in his hand.

"Oh, Hal, it's gold!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get it?"

"What's that?" inquired a voice that chilled Kenyon through, and, looking up, he saw Mr. Miles advancing toward them. He had discarded his crutches and was using a cane.

He held out his free hand toward Pickles, who, like one hypnotized, delivered the object of interest to the aviator. The latter looked at it eagerly for a moment, then fastened his eyes on Hal with searching gaze.

"Boy," he said sternly after a moment's silence; "this nugget is mine. I thought you said —"

He did not finish the sentence, for Hal's face had become so pale that it seemed as if he was going to faint.

CHAPTER XVI

FLIGHT

If Mr. Johnson Miles had charged him of theft with a loud voice, Hal could not have felt the accusation more keenly than he felt it in the aviator's look and tones. And the worst feature of the situation was the fact that the finger of circumstantial proof pointed directly at the boy.

At first, almost overcome with dismay, Hal suddenly realized the injustice of the suspicion against him, and stiffening with anger, he blazed forth:

"What do you mean, sir? Do you mean to say that I stole it?"

Mr. Miles did not answer the question. He merely looked stern and asked another, while a score of boys gathered around, gazing on the two with startled wonder.

"Can you tell me where you got it?" inquired Mr. Miles.

"Yes, sir, I can," Hal replied defiantly. "I found it in the cave."

"Where you found my bag of souvenirs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you turn it over to me with the bag?"

"Because I didn't find them at the same time. I found that nugget to-day after we finished the bridge through the waterfall."

"Why didn't you say something about it? Why did you hide it in your pocket and keep still? A boy would naturally become pretty excited on finding a gold nugget."

"I didn't hide it in my pocket," was Hal's choking reply. "I didn't know what it was and just stuck it in my pocket."

"Why didn't you throw it away?"

"It wasn't like an ordinary stone. It was heavy, and I wanted to look at it in the light."

"Where are the rest of them?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the other nuggets," said the aviator with continued sternness. "There were six in the bag."

For a moment Hal's eye blazed with indignation; then his spirit seemed to collapse. The

implied charge and the suspicious circumstances were too much for him.

"I don't know," he said hoarsely, and with a furtive glance at the boys around him, he walked out of the wash room.

Hal was late at supper that evening. In fact, there were only a few left at the tables when he entered the dining room. He took a seat at a table alone and ate in moody silence. He felt bitter and wished he could leave the school never to return, although no experience in his life had ever been more pleasant than his three years at Lakefarm.

This was the second time that suspicion had been directed toward him regarding the disappearance of the aviator's nuggets, and now he could see no possible way of proving his innocence. Unluckily, he had had no idea of the real nature of his find until Walter Hurst pronounced it gold and the owner appeared on the scene and claimed it.

After supper he went gloomily to his room and sat down and waited to be summoned to the doctor's office. Of course, Mr. Miles had gone straight to Dr. Byrd and informed him of the

scene in the wash room, and the owner of Lake-farm would soon call Hal to account.

But no call came, and Hal soon found himself imagining all sorts of direful explanations of the seeming inactivity. Probably the doctor had sent for the town marshal to come and take the nugget-thief to jail. Or possibly the owner of the school had decided to have nothing more to do with this bad boy and was even now writing to his father to come and take him away.

In a short time Hal had worked himself up to a very nervous and unhappy state. Then he began to plan wildly how he might escape the undeserved punishment that he saw ahead.

"If I could run Mr. Miles' airship I'd fly away in it," he said bitterly. "And it'd serve him right, too. He didn't have any business to condemn me without a hearing. He might have given me the benefit of the doubt until I'd had a chance to prove I was innocent. But I couldn't prove anything with him looking at me that way."

"Hello, Hal, what's the matter?"

Pickles, his roommate, interrupted his unhappy reverie with this cheery interrogation as he entered the room. Pickles was a quiet little fellow

who seldom took anything very seriously and had a habit of stealing on one and surprising him with an unexpected "boo!" Hal started visibly on this occasion, much to the glee of Pickles.

"What's the matter?" repeated the smaller boy as he observed the glum look on Hal's face.

"Nothing," was the half surly reply; "only I'm goin' to run away."

"Run away! Hal! What for?"

"Don't speak so loud, Pick," cautioned Hal. "Yes, I've really made up my mind. I'm going to-night: and I want you to keep my secret."

"Oh, Hal, you mustn't," Pickles gasped under his breath. "What would I do here without you? You're the best friend I've got."

Kenyon was surprised. He had had no idea that any of his associates regarded him with such affection, and this manifestation moved him not a little.

"Pickles," he said warmly; "you're a peach of a kid. I've never got mad at you since I first met you, and you've never got mad at me. That's sayin' a whole lot. Some kids you've got to get mad at every minute to keep 'em from walking all over you."

"Bad, for instance."

"Yes — and no. Bad's a bad one unless you know how to handle him. We've always been good friends, and I like him."

"So do I, but he's mean sometimes. I like Bun better. But what you going to run away for, Hal? Is it the nugget? "

"Yes — and Mr. Miles. He thinks I'm a thief. And so do all the rest."

"I don't, Hal, if you say you're not," declared the faithful Walter.

"Pickles, you're the best fellow on earth," said Kenyon warmly, stepping close and putting both hands on his friend's shoulders. "You almost make me feel like sticking. But I can't."

"Why not, Hal? "

"Everybody — excepting you — thinks I'm a thief, and I can't prove I'm not. So I'm just going to cut loose. Some day I'll come back and prove I'm innocent."

"I'm sorry I picked up the nugget, Hal. I wish I hadn't told what it was. But I was so surprised I couldn't help it."

"That's all right, Pick. It wasn't your fault. I don't blame you a bit."

"When you goin', Hal?"

"To-night — just as soon as everybody's asleep."

"Where you going — home?"

"I don't know. Maybe; maybe not. Anyway, I'll write home and tell mother and father I didn't steal."

"Let me go with you, Hal."

"No, Pickles, you mustn't think of doing such a thing. You must stay here and tell them all I'm not a thief. Oh, Pick, it's terrible to be called such a thing. You don't know how I feel about it. Your father's rich and mine's poor, but I wouldn't steal if I was starving — any more'n you would. Even when I was selling newspapers in Denver and making only half or quarter of a cent on each paper, I couldn't think of stealing. I'd run a block to catch a man if I found I'd given him the wrong change. I'll write to Dr. Byrd and tell him all about it, for I'll have to thank him for what he has done for me."

"Hal, I'll do anything you want me to, but I'd rather go along. If you'll wait, I'll write to my father and he'll come here and fix everything up for you."

"No, it's all settled what I'm going to do," Hal answered determinedly. "You stay here, and when I get settled in a job somewhere, I'll write you."

"Well, it's half an hour till bedtime," said Pickles. "I'm going out till then."

"Don't give me away."

"I should say not. You'll be here when I come back?"

"Yes."

Walter slipped softly out of the room, as was his custom. In the library he found Fes Sharer and whispered a few words in his ear. Then the two started out on a hunt and soon rounded up Bun and Bad. The four chums then held a whispered conference out on the lawn. As they separated, Pickles said:

"Remember, in an hour, under the big poplar."

Half an hour after bedtime, three boys might have been seen to slip out of a window of the dormitory to the ground. It was dark, the stars twinkling sharply in the clear sky. Swiftly they sped away from the building, along the edge of the campus and two hundred yards beyond, until they came to a great tall tree, whose abundant branches

and foliage hugged close and tapering to the trunk. There they stopped, sat down, with the tree between themselves and the school, and whispered excitedly to each other.

Ten minutes later another dark form emerged from another window of the dormitory and took a similar course. He carried a bundle under one arm. Hardly had he left the shadow of the school buildings and the bordering trees when another youth slipped from the same window and followed him.

The three forms under the tree hugged close to the ground as the boy with the bundle passed within twenty feet of them. Presently the fifth boy reached the tree and the three forms under it stood erect.

"Come on," beckoned the last youth, and all four started in pursuit of the one ahead.

Presently the latter heard a footstep behind and threw a startled look backward. With a half choked cry of astonishment, he broke into a run and fairly flew along the road that led toward Mummy Cañon.

CHAPTER XVII

EXPLORING THE CAVE

"Hal! Oh, Hal! Stop! This is Pickles."

Hal stopped almost as suddenly as he had started to run. He recognized the cautious cry of his friend and waited for the four to overtake him.

"What you kids up to?" he inquired, after scanning the faces of the quartet. "I told you not to come, Pickles."

"We're not going to run away with you," he replied. "We're just going to walk a ways and then go back."

"I'm glad to have you come, but you might get into trouble."

"No, we won't," declared Frank with something of his old time boastfulness. "We can get back any time before morning and nobody'll ever see us."

"Where you going to-night?" inquired Ferdinand.

"To the cave first."

"In the cañon?"

"Yes, I want to see if there's any more of those nuggets there."

"You haven't any light," reminded Byron.

"No, but I've got some matches."

"I know where the lanterns are," Frank announced. "They're in the garage, and I can crawl in through the window. Let's get them and explore the cave."

"Yes, let's do," Ferdinand said eagerly. "Come on, Bad. You and I'll go an' get the lanterns, while the rest wait here for us."

No objection being offered to this plan, Frank and Ferdinand made a dash back toward the garage. They were gone about fifteen minutes and returned with four lanterns. Then the march toward the cañon was taken up.

Of course, there was much excited talk on the way. Every one of the self-appointed committee that was "seeing Hal off" expressed confidence in his integrity and all were highly indignant at Mr. Miles' suspicions.

"He'd better go take a jump in the lake," said Byron with unwonted vehemence. "He's got no 'preciation of what you did for him."

"Yes, if it hadn't been for Hal, he'd probably

never have got any of his specimens back at all," observed Ferdinand.

"Somebody ought to slip him one," declared Frank savagely.

"I don't think he meant to be so hard on me," interposed Hal charitably. "I was pretty sore at first, but when I saw how bad things looked for me, I wanted to get out. I wouldn't have run away, but I don't believe I could ever prove I wasn't a thief. When you get in a fix like that, the best thing to do is to pack up and move."

The interest the boys felt in the cave they were about to explore finally resulted in a change of subject, and Hal's troubles were forgotten for the time being. In fact, Hal himself forgot much of the bitterness of his woes in the general eagerness of the conversation.

Arrived at the scene of their construction work in the cañon, they lost no time in crossing the river and hastening up the walk to the waterfall cave. Outside the latter they stopped only long enough to light two of the lanterns. The other two they found without oil and set them aside. Then they crossed the second bridge into the cave.

Hal now assumed the leadership. He realized

that the expedition was not without danger and felt the responsibility for the safety of his friends to be resting on his own shoulders. His first act, therefore, on entering the cave was to drive the other boys back several feet from the precipice and the roaring waterfall. Then he led them beyond the bend in the passage to the farther end of the cave, where the noise of the fall was not so deafening as to prevent conversation.

"You kids stay back here and explore this part while I go up in front and see if I can find any more of those nuggets," suggested Hal, concealing by his manner his real motive in assigning them well back from the danger point. He knew that if he told them he was afraid they would get too close to the edge and fall over, some or all of them would be determined to hover close to the cataract.

Hal returned to the mouth of the cave with one of the lanterns. He could not help shuddering a little as he approached the edge of the precipice, and being of practical mind, he soon found himself speculating on a method of making this point more safe for visitors.

"There ought to be a fence or high railing along

here to prevent people from getting too close and falling in," he told himself. "If Dr. Byrd wants to invite people to visit this cave, he ought to make it safe. I think I'll suggest this to him — "

His soliloquy was interrupted suddenly when he awoke to the fact that he was running away and did not intend to return to the doctor's school.

"My, what a fool I am!" he exclaimed. "I think I'm losing my head. Really, I wish I wasn't running away. I do hate to go. But — but — I've got to."

He flashed his lantern about and began his search for the lost nuggets. He examined the floor and several crevices in the walls for fifteen or twenty minutes, but nothing rewarded his search. How the one nugget he had found got there was as big a mystery as the presence of the bag of souvenirs in the cave had been.

Finally he gave it up and went back to the farther part of the cave and rejoined the other boys. Byron and Walter were gazing upward at Frank and Ferdinand who were climbing up the wall on the right, which inclined like the side of a mountain. Fes carried the lantern.

"Look out, up there; don't fall, or there'll be

some broken bones, and maybe necks," warned Hal. "We don't want any such accidents to-night."

"We're all right; just watch us," answered Frank with his usual bravado.

"Where you going?" inquired Hal.

"As high as we can," replied Ferdinand "Come on up. It isn't steep. It's easy climbing. You couldn't fall in the dark."

Fes and Frank were by this time fifty or sixty feet from the floor, and the light of their lantern still revealed no sign of a ceiling, or a converging of the walls overhead. This was rather astonishing, and Hal was moved with a desire to take part in the upward exploration.

"I'm going up, too," he announced to Byron and Walter. "It doesn't look steep and it's rough enough to give a good foothold."

"Let's climb up with 'em, Pick," suggested Byron.

"All right," answered Pickles, suiting the action to the word. In a moment all three were following the two leaders up the almost stair-like ascent. They climbed rapidly, for the success of Fes and Frank had given them confidence. Up,

up, they went, Hal leading and Byron and Walter following in respective order.

Suddenly they were startled by a succession of cries from above. They stopped and looked upward apprehensively, and were surprised to see Fes and Frank standing on a ledge and looking down upon them.

"Come on, come on, kids," yelled Frank. "We're clear through the roof. It's all open up here."

Thrilled by this announcement, Hal quickened his steps and those behind him did likewise. In a few moments they had climbed up to where the leaders were waiting for them. Frank had spoken truly. They were standing on a level spot several yards in diameter; on one side arose a perpendicular wall of the mountain and on the other, far below, they looked down into the deep shadows of Mummy Cañon.

"My! isn't this great!" Hal exclaimed enthusiastically. "We're real discoverers. Maybe nobody's ever been up here before."

"Nobody ever tried to climb Flathead, they say," Byron observed. "I bet nobody ever got as high as this."

"I wonder if we couldn't climb higher from here," said Fes, scanning the perpendicular wall.

"That doesn't look much like it," said Pickles with a laugh.

"I wish the moon'd come out so we could see farther," said Hal. "I hate to come so far as this and stop."

With these words, he flashed the rays of his lantern about. At one edge of the wall they found a break that looked like the mouth of a passage, but it was blocked by a large bowlder.

"I'm going to climb over it," said Hal. "Here, Fes, give me a boost."

Fes did as requested. With his lantern in one hand, Hal was boosted up to the top of the bowlder, which was about five feet through and perfectly round.

"Yes, there's a passage here," he announced. "Come on over."

By a series of boosts, Byron, Frank, and Fes climbed over the big rock, the latter scaling on top of the bowlder to reach assistance to Walter. After they had passed this barrier, Hal stopped to examine it more carefully and then said:

"Let's try to push the rock over a little. It's

balanced here on a little neck. Maybe we can move it so we won't have to climb over it when we come back."

Hal had gone on ahead a short distance and paid little attention to this suggestion until he turned his head and saw his four companions with their shoulders to the bowlder.

"Hey! Stop! Stop!" he cried out frantically, realizing what would happen if they moved the rock.

But his warning was too late. Even as he screamed his command, the balanced rock toppled over and rolled heavily down the slight incline right into the mouth of the roof exit of the cave.

"Oh! if it would only go through!" was Hal's wild wish. But it didn't. The runaway sprang past his friends, lantern in hand, and made a hasty examination.

The bowlder was wedged fast, effectually blocking their only avenue of escape from the steep-walled mountain.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ISLAND IN THE AIR

For a minute, perhaps, not a word was uttered. The hopelessness of their situation was all too evident to the five boys. No one dared to suggest that the passage from which they had rolled the bowlder would lead to any possibility of escape.

"Now you have done it!" Hal gasped at length. "How in the world are we ever going to get out of this?"

Nobody answered. There was no reply to make. The situation was too fearful to permit of excuses or shifting responsibility.

Hal was the only member of the party who did not seem to be paralyzed. He advanced toward the bowlder and flashed his lantern over it. The opening in the rocky cliff was not entirely closed, but the rock was wedged in such a position that it was folly to try to make an exit here. The top of the crevice filled by the big stone converged almost to a point, the rest of the opening, eight or ten feet long and three or four feet wide, being

over a sheer drop of thirty feet. There was no possibility of creeping around the bowlder and gaining a footing on the slanting cave wall.

"C-can't we break the ground here and make the stone fall down?" suggested Ferdinand in chattering accents.

"Break the ground?" Hal replied fiercely. "Don't you see we're standing on granite? You could hardly break it with dynamite — and we haven't even a wooden crowbar, to say nothing of a pick. I don't know what we're going to do. We'll starve to death. I guess the only thing we can do is to sit down an' wait till morning," announced Hal gloomily as he finished his inspection. "I wonder what time it is."

Byron looked at his watch and announced that it was nearly midnight. Then Hal continued:

"I don't see that we can do anything before daylight. Let's all huddle up close together and go to sleep."

This seemed to be the most sensible thing to do. The summer nights in Colorado are cool, and the boys found it necessary to huddle together in order to keep warm. Of course, they did not go to sleep at once. There were several reasons

why it was difficult for them to drift off into slumber. First, they were in trouble, serious trouble; second, their bed was very hard; third, the place was wild, and the noises were strange. Then the moon arose, giving the scene a most lonesome appearance.

But at last all consciousness left the strange camp, and the next thing the boys knew it was morning.

Hal awoke first. He suddenly found himself wondering at the hardness of his bed; then, like a flash, the truth came back to him. Quietly he arose, gazed a moment at his sleeping companions and then turned toward the blocked exit. Another examination of the roof-opening of the cave proved that he had judged rightly. Certainly there was no possibility of their escaping this way without a pick or other steel tool.

Next he turned his attention toward the passage from which the heavy bowlder had been rolled. It seemed almost as if this way must have been cut by the hand of man. It ran with considerable upward incline between the bulk of the mountain and a huge rocky bluff.

Leaving his companions still asleep, Hal started

up this pass, which ran a hundred feet through almost solid rock. Underfoot it was rough, with rocky projections and bowlders, but the boy passed over it rapidly until he reached the end. Here he found himself at the foot of a wooded slope, not so very steep, that ran upward for several hundred feet.

"Why, I believe we could climb the mountain from this point," he exclaimed half-aloud. "There's a ledge up there that runs right over the Mummy, and there's another slope over that and then some rocks. It doesn't look nearly so steep up here. I'm going back and wake the fellows."

He hastened back and found Byron and Walter sitting up and looking around them. Remembering his predicament, Pickles began to sniffle with fright. This awakened Frank and Fes.

"Oh, fellows!" exclaimed Hal eagerly, "I've made a wonderful discovery."

Pickles ceased to cry.

"Have you found a way down?" inquired Ferd.

"No, not yet, but maybe we'll find one. But I believe we can climb up to the top."

"On top of Flathead!" Byron exclaimed.

"Yes, on top of Flathead."

"What good will that do us?" inquired Frank. "That won't help us get down."

"I don't know — it may," replied Hal hopefully. "Anyway, it's better than staying here. We're a long distance from the road, and the bushes growing along the edge here would keep anybody from seeing us. Maybe we can throw some stones down and attract somebody's attention over near the pass."

This suggestion struck the others as a good one, and they were all ready in an instant to begin the climb. They realized that they would soon be hungry and thirsty and that they must do something soon. So they started without further delay.

The ascent up the wooded incline was quickly made and in twenty minutes they were standing on the ledge over the Mummy. Here they stopped a short while and rested. They looked eagerly along the government road for travelers, but saw none. Then they started upward again.

After passing through a second belt of timber, the boys found it necessary to follow a winding course, along ledges, around steep places, then

up a slope less steep, but rocky. From a distance this ascent appeared much steeper than it proved to be in the climbing, and at no time did the boys feel they were in danger of falling.

At last they reached the top. The journey upward had seemed much longer than it really was, for they had had no breakfast. Of course they were very hungry, but fortunately they had found a clear spring on the way up and quenched their thirst with deep satisfaction.

Ordinarily their interest in this newly discovered country — for the top of the mountain seemed almost extensive enough to be termed a country — would have been eager, but under the present circumstances a vastly more important question occupied their minds. They had come up in order to get down, and they now directed their attention to devising a plan.

Immediately they began an exploration of the mountain top in the hope of finding a way to get down. This flat-top area was fairly regular in circumference and half a mile in diameter. On reaching the highest point of their climb, they rested for half an hour and then started to walk around the edge.

Their view of the mesa through field-glasses from Porcupine Hill a few weeks before proved to have afforded them a fairly accurate idea of the top of Flathead. The eastern half was covered with a growth of spruce, the western half was rather hilly and craggy, and in the center was a pool of water, occupying a hollow that seemed to be the catch-basin of the whole expanse.

The exploration of the plateau was begun at a southeastern point and the boys decided to take a course northward along the eastern edge. This took them through the wooded section. After they had proceeded a quarter of a mile or more they found themselves on a great ledge within a stone's throw, it seemed, of the government road.

Eagerly they scanned the highway for passing teams, and they were not disappointed. Two were approaching from the south and one from the north, the latter just entering the cañon through the northern pass. Hal picked up a stone half as big as his fist and hurled it out toward the road.

The result was disheartening. He had miscal-

culated the distance. The stone fell into the river, fifty yards short of the highway.

"My goodness!" Hal exclaimed. "We can't attract anybody's attention that way."

"Let's holler," suggested Frank. "Maybe they can hear us."

All joined in a lusty scream, which, too, was disappointing, for they felt instinctively, after it died away, that it had not penetrated far below. None of the travelers seemed to pay any attention to it. If they heard it, they caught no significance in the sound.

"We've got to do something else," Hal announced desperately. He did his best to appear cheerful, but as he looked into the tired faces of his companions, he felt his heart sink heavily.

"Let's make some bows and arrows," Pickles suggested.

"Pick, you're a peach!" Hal exclaimed. "That's just the thing. We'll tie some notes to arrows and shoot 'em at the people passing."

"We'll have to hit them or they probably won't see the arrows," was Byron's advice.

"I've got a scheme to make 'em hear the arrows," announced Hal.

"How?" asked Fes.

"Make whistles on the ends."

The boys had done this before by way of amusement. All of them were skilled in making whistles of any twig or small limb from which the bark could be removed in the form of a tube.

"We haven't got any string to make a bow," Frank objected.

"Yes we have," replied Kenyon, holding up his runaway bundle of clothes, around which was wound a liberal supply of fishline.

Realizing that their situation was desperate, the boys set to work with a will. Fes and Byron made a bow, while Hal and the other two boys began a search for arrow wood. They found a patch of shrubbery that contained an abundance of long straight stems, and they cut a score or more of these and made them into arrows. By this time the bow-makers had produced a good mountain-ash bow with a strong string of several fish-cord strands, and Hal and his helpers had three whistle-arrows ready to shriek a novel message through the air.

Hal now tore several leaves from a notebook, inscribed messages of distress on them and

wrapped one around each of the arrows and tied it fast. Then he took his stand on the ledge overlooking the road in the cañon, while the other boys, seated on the ground, made more whistle-arrows.

Presently Kenyon fitted an arrow to the bow, and the shaft-makers sprang to their feet to watch the effect of his first shot. The whistle-tipped stem flew with a sharp, piercing sound that thrilled all with hope. Eagerly they followed its flight, while the shriek died away and the arrow sped far out and down, just beyond the road and the traveler at whom the shaft was aimed.

"I'll attract his attention pretty soon if I can keep on makin' as good shots as that," declared Hal as he let fly another arrow.

It was impossible to determine whether or not the attention of the driver in the buggy had been attracted by the first two whistling arrows, but the third certainly had a startling effect. The boys high overhead saw the horse suddenly spring forward and race along the road at a break-neck speed. Around a curve he went, the carriage tipping over and spilling its occupant out. The horse tore loose from the harness fastenings and

sped madly along the road, past a team coming from the opposite direction, and out through the northern pass.

"Is he killed?" gasped Byron.

"No," replied Hal, leaning forward eagerly. "See, he's got up and is running after his horse. I hope he finds the arrow and reads the note."

"You hit the horse, didn't you?" Frank inquired.

"I must have, unless it was the whistle that scared him."

With feelings of deep disappointment, the boys watched the man run, or walk rapidly, along the road until he disappeared through the pass. Meanwhile the work of making more whistle-arrows continued, and several were sent screaming down toward two other teams that had appeared in view. Evidently, the attention of the occupants of these carriages was attracted by the strange sound in the air, but none of the note-bearing shafts were discovered by them.

For several hours the boys continued at the work, and more than a score of arrows were sent flying down toward passing vehicles. Meanwhile, they had become very hungry and thirsty and

some of them visited the pool of water, but it was stale and brackish and they could not drink it.

By the middle of the afternoon all were thoroughly disheartened, although they continued in their attempts to attract the attention of passers on the road below.

Finally a new element of expectancy was introduced when Fes called attention to a strange looking object in the air two miles to the north. He was very excited when he beheld it, and exclaimed:

"Look! Look! Off there! What's that?"

All looked eagerly. They were in a mood to hope for help from any improbable source.

For several minutes they gazed silently at the moving object, at first believing it to be a huge bird. Finally Hal electrified his companions by announcing wildly:

"It's Mr. Miles in his new airship!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE RESCUING AIRSHIP

"How do you know?"

"I bet it is!"

"Do you think he's comin' here?"

Questions and exclamations such as these came in rapid succession following the announcement from Hal that the object flying toward them high in the air was Johnson Miles' new airship. It was approaching rapidly and seemed to be headed right for the top of Flathead.

"Maybe he knows we're here."

Pickles made the suggestion, and nobody seemed disposed to take it as a joke. However Hal replied:

"I don't believe he does. How could he, unless somebody found one of our arrows? We didn't see anybody pick any of 'em up."

"Maybe he's just hunting for us," suggested Fes.

"It's more likely he's just taking his first

flight," said Hal. "I'd feel more hopeful if I knew that was true."

"So would I," said Byron. "He'd probably fly up here the first place. If he's hunting for us, he won't come here at all unless he knows we're here."

"Well he's surely makin' for this mountain," Hal declared after a few moments of silence.

It certainly seemed true. The biplane was flying at an elevation slightly above that of the plateau, and did not waver in its course.

"We've got to get busy and make sure that he sees us," Hal suddenly exclaimed. "He might fly right over this mountain without stopping unless we attract his attention. Take off your coats and wave 'em and make all the noise you can when he gets near."

Hal set the example and the others followed. Soon the five mountain-top Crusoes were cutting the wildest capers imaginable and creating a noise with their throats that surely was loud enough to be heard within a hundred yards by the aviator in spite of the vibrations of his propellers.

The airship was making remarkable speed and in less than five minutes from the time it was first

sighted, Johnson Miles glided gently down to a level spot not far from where the truant Scouts were capering about. They had forgotten their hunger, their tired condition, and their despair.

Such a jumble of excited questions as followed the alighting of the airship could hardly be represented without a phonographic record. The boys were eager to know how the aviator discovered them — did he know they were on the mountain? — and Mr. Miles was equally curious to learn how they had come there. Finally he said:

"Boys, I've brought you some food and water. You said you were hungry."

That settled it. Mr. Miles had read one of the notes on the whistle-arrows. Naturally, they marveled at this, but Hal satisfied himself by concluding that one of the arrows had fallen into one of the vehicles at which he had directed his aim.

From the cabin of the airship, the aviator produced a large jug of water and a basket filled with sandwiches and other edibles. Eagerly the boys poured the cool liquid down their throats and then pounced upon the contents of the basket. For a while they did nothing but eat and drink, but at last Pickles inquired:

"How did you know we was here?"

"He found one of the arrows," laughed Bad.

"No, I didn't," replied the aviator.

"There! there!" Pickles jeered, pointing his finger at Frank. "You will know it all, will you?"

Frank was a little crestfallen, and awaited developments, hoping for an opportunity to vindicate himself.

"I didn't find an arrow, but somebody else did," explained the rescuer.

"A-ha! What did I tell you?" cried Frank.

"He didn't find it," Walter replied stoutly.

"Well, what's the difference? I suppose if I said the top of this mountain's flat, you'd say it isn't 'cause there's hills on it."

"My, what silly things you boys quarrel over," exclaimed Mr. Miles. "You're as bad as rival politicians. If you've settled the question I'll proceed. The arrow hit Dr. Edwards' horse as he was driving through the cañon."

"I bet that was the horse that ran away," interrupted Byron.

"Yes, it was," replied Mr. Miles. "He tipped over the carriage, broke loose and ran back to

town. There he was caught and the arrow found sticking in his back. The person who found it took your note to Dr. Byrd."

"Was Dr. Edwards hurt?" inquired Hal.

"Not much. Somebody overtook him just outside the cañon and gave him a lift, so he didn't have to walk all the way home."

Hal's note tied to the arrow contained brief information of their predicament and also that they were hungry and thirsty. It did not, however, contain any details as to how they had been trapped over the waterfall cave and later reached the top of the mountain. Hence, they found it necessary to relate their experiences as soon as Mr. Miles had finished his story. Incidentally, the man discovered that Hal was running away, but he made no comment on the subject. Neither did he refer to the nugget episode, which he suspected to have something to do with the boys' escapade.

Finally all the food was eaten, all the water was gone, and all the stories were told, and then Mr. Miles suggested that it was time to return to Lakefarm.

"How we going to go?" asked Ferdinand. "In the airship?"

"Sure. You boys all wanted a ride in it. Now you'll have a chance to prove your nerve."

"We can't all ride at once," objected Frank.

"Oh, come now, Bad, don't back down," admonished the aviator mischievously. "You know you cried out the loudest that you wouldn't be afraid."

"I ain't afraid," protested Frank angrily, "but you know there isn't room enough for all of us."

"No. I agree with you, Frank. I'll take only one with me on the first trip, and that'll be you."

"Why me? I don't want to ride alone with you. You'll be busy all the time. I want somebody else to talk with. Let Pickles go the first trip."

"All right. I don't care; only I want to try the ship with one passenger before I take two. Pickles, you're not afraid to go first, are you?"

"No, I ain't afraid," replied Walter, smiling. He seldom became excited or disturbed. Doubtless he would have watched the moon shunt across the heavens with no more fear than the average boy feels over a burning house or a runaway horse.

"I ain't afraid either," insisted Frank, but he did not offer to make the first trip with Mr. Miles.

"All right, you'll have a chance to prove your bravery next time," assured the latter. "Come on, Pickles, we must hurry, for it's getting late and I've got to make two more trips before sundown. It's after four o'clock now."

"You can make 'em all in half an hour, can't you?" inquired Hal.

"Pretty nearly, if everything goes well. But something might happen to delay me."

Walter and the aviator now got aboard the aeroplane and Mr. Miles started the engine. The two big propellers turned faster and faster, and the biplane gave a few jerks and tugs, then leaped and bounded forward swiftly over the uneven ground until the wheels no longer touched the earth. Rapidly now she arose in the air, circling around towards the north.

In order to insure safety for Walter while giving his entire attention to the management of the vessel, Miles had closed the front and rear slides, so that they were enclosed in a room, or cabin, twelve feet long, including the tapering forequarters, and five feet wide. The aviator sat at the wheel in the narrow prow, while Walter was free to move about as he wished.

The four boys left behind gazed eagerly and admiringly at the airship with her invisible occupants for several minutes, not a word escaping the lips of any of them. Suddenly Frank broke the silence by saying:

"Say, fellows, maybe we'll never have a chance to come up here again. Dr. Byrd won't let us come up in the airship, and the passage through the cave's closed. Let's explore this mountain top some before Mr. Miles gets back."

"There isn't much to explore," replied Ferd. "We can see pretty near everything standing right here."

"We can't see the other side of those big rocks and cliffs over there," Byron answered, pointing to the south through the thin belt of timber. "That's what we were lookin' at through the field glasses from Uncle Sam's mountain, you know."

"Yes, let's go and have a look at it," proposed Hal.

There was no need of further urging, and the four boys started off at a brisk rate. Through the timber they ran and then southward along the high ridge of rocks and mounds, until they came

to a passage through the rocks. Into this passage they entered and hastened on until near the middle a new discovery brought them to a halt.

"My goodness! Look at that!"

Hal exclaimed thus as he stopped suddenly and pointed toward something very remarkable fifteen feet ahead. It was the opening of a cave in the clay and stone wall, and slightly ajar was a wooden door of rough-hewn tree trunks.

"Why, somebody lives up here!" cried Ferdinand in excited tones. "Let's go and see who it is."

"No," Hal cautioned. "We've got to be careful. If anybody does live here, he's probably crazy. Let's pick up some stones to throw at him if he comes at us."

The boys all accepted this suggestion and soon they were armed. Then they advanced cautiously past the opening in the left wall.

They reached the western end of the passage and turned to the right. Here they found a much more satisfactory view of the rocky and bluff-lined elevation they had observed through the field-glasses from the top of Porcupine Hill. In places the elevation rose two hundred feet above the

level of the plateau. Perhaps at no place was it more than one hundred feet in thickness, but it was seven or eight hundred feet long, constituting by far the biggest mole on the pate of Flathead.

Near the pass the line of cliffs presented an almost perpendicular face to the south, scooped out here and there in the form of overhanging shelters. And in these shelters, twenty or thirty feet from the Flathead level were a number of openings, cave-like and fronted with ruined outer structures, that thrilled Hal with a realization of an important discovery.

But this thrill was quickly replaced by another more intense and immediately important. It was occasioned by the appearance of a live, cat-like form, with burning eyes and crouching, hungry attitude in one of the openings — a panther — and it was looking right down on the boys.

CHAPTER XX

THE PANTHER AND THE CAVE

Exclamations of fear escaped the boys as they saw the threatening attitude of the fierce animal in the cliff cave. Hal, who had had recent experience with a similar animal — perhaps the same one — stood his ground and gazed calmly at the mountain lion. But Ferdinand and Frank were quickly panic-stricken and turned and fled into the passage. Byron hesitated a few moments; then the fright of Bad and Fes proved too much for his nerve, and he turned and followed them as fast as he could run.

It would be too much to expect even Hal to stand cool and unmoved under such discouraging circumstances. The support of even a physically weak companion would have tended to strengthen his nerve. As it was, he felt an irresistible power pulling him backward, and he, too, turned and raced after the other Boy Scouts.

He expected any moment to hear the panther come bounding after him and to be knocked over

by the springing of the heavy body upon his back. In despair he wished he had not lost courage and had stood his ground, but he had no power to turn and await the approach of the animal. It was too late now. His only hope — but was there any hope at all?

Yes, there was. In the passage was the cave with the rude timber door. The other boys were just entering it. Hal reached the entrance just as Frank was swinging the door to.

Fearfully he looked behind, and saw the mountain lion entering the passage in a half hesitating manner. Doubtless he had had experience with human beings that taught him the wisdom of dealing cautiously with them. Hal stepped inside and pulled the door to; then, finding that it swung easily and fitted the entrance fully, he pushed it open again and stepped outside.

The panther had stopped twenty feet away, crouching to spring, yet hesitating as if afraid. It was rather dark in the passage and his eyes blazed like two coals of fire. Hal stood ready to spring back into the cave and pull the door to if he should spring.

"Come on in and shut the door," pleaded Frank

in trembling tones. Byron and Fred seconded the request, but Hal had good reason for doing otherwise.

If he shut himself and his companions in the cave, it would mean a long imprisonment. He would be afraid to open the door again lest he find the panther close to the entrance ready to spring in. Meanwhile Mr. Miles would return and would be unable to find them, and then the mischief would be to pay. Hal must remain outside and watch for the airship and scream for help when the aviator landed.

"No, I'm going to stay here as long as he don't spring at me," Hal replied. "If it's too dark in there and you're afraid, here's some matches."

He took several matches from his pocket and held them behind him. Byron stepped out gingerly and received them and hastened back into the cave. Meanwhile, Hal was measuring the distance between him and the puma and wondering if he couldn't do something to make the big cat retreat.

"If I'd pick up one of those stones and fire it at him, I wonder what he'd do," he mused. "Would he jump at me or would he jump back?

Maybe I ought to just try to scare him and not hit him. If I hit him, it may make him mad.

"No, I guess I'll throw one right at him. I couldn't hit him if I tried. Nobody could hit a cat; they're too quick."

So he picked up a stone half as large as his fist and threw it with all his force right at the animal. The latter sprang nimbly aside and the stone bounded several yards farther on. Encouraged at the failure of the mountain lion to spring at him, Hal picked up another stone and hurled it, then another and another and another. The beast sprang aside and backward each time, snarling angrily, but hardly with an accent of courage. Hal kept up his attack with more and more vigor, and presently the animal turned and bounded out of the passage. Just as he disappeared, Hal's three companions came rushing toward him in a manner so startling that the watcher outside chilled with a fear that the panther's mate had been discovered inside.

They stopped at the entrance, thus reassuring Hal somewhat. But this reassurance was dispelled when he turned and saw their white faces and scared attitudes.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, for the moment forgetting the panther.

"Oh, Hal!" gasped Frank. "There's a man back there, and he's dead!"

"A man! Dead!"

It was Hal's turn to gasp.

"Yes," replied Frank. "We lit some matches and saw him."

"There's a gun back there, too," continued Fes, and Hal interrupted him eagerly.

"Is that so?" he exclaimed. "Bun, you and Bad stay here and watch, while Fes and I go and have a look. If the panther comes back, holler to me, but don't shut the door unless he comes too close."

With these instructions, Hal entered the cave, followed by the trembling Ferdinand. He struck a match to light his way, and held another to substitute as soon as the first should burn out. The hole in the wall was an ordinary cave, eight feet wide beyond the narrow entrance, six or seven feet from floor to ceiling, and fifteen feet deep.

At the farther end, Hal discovered evidences that the place had been used as a living room. There was no table and no chair, but he found a

lantern, a pine box, a gun, some blankets and several articles of clothing. On the blankets lay the form of a man. His clothes were torn and his face was mangled. Evidently he had been attacked by some wild animal, perhaps the mountain lion. The man must have been dead for two or three days.

Realizing that no more time should be spent in this place, Hal picked up the rifle which leaned against the wall, and returned to the entrance. There he examined the weapon, which was a Winchester. He pulled down the lever, which opened the chamber and disclosed five cartridges resting in the magazine. At the same time an empty shell flew out, and as he threw back the lever a fresh cartridge slipped into its place.

"Come on, fellows," said Hal, starting for the entrance. "If the panther comes too close, I'll shoot 'im. But I don't think he'll bother us."

The boys hastened out of the pass and into the belt of timber. Before they reached the open, they discovered the airship resting on the ground and Mr. Miles looking about him in alarm at the disappearance of the four Scouts.

"Where have you been?" he inquired as they

came near. Then he added in a tone of astonishment: "And where did you get that gun?"

"We've had some adventure, believe me," replied Hal, as he stopped and rested the butt of the rifle on a rock. "We've seen a panther and found a dead man in a cave."

The aviator was amazed and demanded further details. The boys told their story in a picturesque manner, with many gestures and some slang. The aviator would have been glad to have made a personal investigation, but it was getting so late that he decided it best not to delay. So he said:

"We've got to get a move on us, or we'll find ourselves making a trip through the air in the dark. Come on, now. Who's going on the next trip?"

Frank and Ferdinand got aboard, and the ship again jerked and bounded over the rough ground, then arose and circled toward the school. Hal and Byron remained, with the gun for protection in case the mountain lion should appear again. But little fear was felt from that source after the experience they had had with the animal.

"I bet it's the same panther we met over on

Porcupine," declared Byron soon after they were left alone.

"I bet it is too," replied Hal.

In a short time after they saw the airship glide down onto the campus, it arose again, and in ten minutes it alighted on Flathead once more.

Then Hal and Byron got aboard and experienced their first thrills as aerial passengers. It was not nearly so sensational as they had expected, however. Indeed, it was hardly more thrilling than going up in an elevator, for they were shut in on all sides and could look out only through the windows, and this proved not much different from gazing out of a window of a sky-scraper in the city.

CHAPTER XXI

TO FLATHEAD BY AIRSHIP AGAIN.

Dr. Byrd said little to the boys that evening. He greeted them quietly, but not severely, as they arrived, looked them over to see that they were sound and unhurt by exposure, hustled them to the bath and later to supper, and then sent them to bed.

The boys wondered a little over this. Naturally, they all expected to be called on the carpet, lectured, and then punished. But the doctor's tone of voice was almost reassuring. He suspected that they had been punished enough and that if a boy won't think after such an experience, there isn't much hope for him. He understood the motive that had caused Hal to run away, as well as the sentiments that had moved the other boys to accompany him.

Next morning, however, Dr. Byrd called the five truants into his office. He asked them to be seated, and then turned to his desk, at which he busied himself ten or fifteen minutes. At the end

of this period Mr. Miles entered and took a seat near the doctor, who now wheeled around in his chair and gave attention to his callers.

"Well, boys," he said slowly, wiping his glasses with his handkerchief, "what do you think of yourselves? Are you proud of what you have done, or do you agree that such an escapade deserves something of a reckoning?" he added as he squinted with one eye through one of the lenses to see if it was clear.

Each of the boys waited for one of the others to answer. As the doctor had addressed none of them individually, now was a good opportunity for them to maintain the silence so often urged upon the young in the presence of older persons.

"I see you're not very proud of what you've done," continued the doctor. "And I'm not particularly proud of you either, although you conducted yourselves well after you found yourselves in a bad fix, I understand. Why did you decide to run away, Hal?"

Kenyon hung his head. Then he stole a glance at the aviator, who reassured him with a kindly look.

"Mr. Miles thought I was a thief, and I couldn't prove I wasn't," Hal answered.

"You found a nugget in the cave, did you?"

"Yes, but I didn't know what it was till I dropped it in the wash room. I hunted for the others in the cave night before last, but couldn't find any more."

"Well, Mr. Miles tells me he has decided that you are honest. He believes your story after being with you and talking with you on the mountain. But don't you think you made a mistake by running away? Shouldn't you have remained here and faced the music?"

"Maybe I should," Hal replied dubiously. "But I don't see how I could have proved I was innocent."

"Well," concluded the doctor slowly, "I've decided you ought not to be punished; only I want to give you this advice: Don't ever run away from unjust suspicion and don't do anything that will make you liable to just suspicion. As to you other boys, there is no excuse for your running away."

"We didn't mean to run away," broke in Pickles. "We were just going a ways with Hal

and then come back before morning. But we got caught."

"Is that true?" inquired the doctor, addressing the other boys.

"Yes, it is," came the reply in chorus.

"Well!" exclaimed the owner of Lakefarm. "It came near being a pretty serious trap, didn't it? I'll take the matter under advisement and decide later what I'll do. Meanwhile, there is a more important matter to be looked after. How would you boys like to visit the top of Flathead again?"

"In the airship?" inquired Byron eagerly.

"That's the only way to get up there, now that the passage through the roof of the cave is closed."

All the boys were overjoyed at the prospect.

"We are going to visit the cave where you found the dead body of a man," continued Dr. Byrd. "I have notified the coroner and he has expressed the desire to have you all present when he takes the body away. It won't be necessary, but I've decided to let you go if you wish to. I am going myself. I have full confidence in the safety of Mr. Miles' airship."

"When are we going?" Hal inquired.

"As soon as the coroner gets here — half an hour. Now go and get ready for the trip, if you've decided you want to go."

The five Scouts left the doctor's office and went to their rooms. They doffed their class-room clothes and shoes and substituted their coarse, strong mountain-climbing suits and heavy-nailed footgear. Then they hastened out onto the campus, where they found Mr. Miles getting the airship ready to fly. Most of the other boys of the school were gathered around the aeroplane, watching proceedings with interest.

Of course the five returned truants were the objects of much interest and questioning when they appeared. The other boys all knew in a general way what had happened to their runaway associates, and they were now hungry for details. But the arrival of the coroner and the announcement that the boy explorers of Flathead were about to make another trip through the air added a new excitement and so much confusion that there was little opportunity for anybody to gain any information.

Coroner Huffman and Pickles made the first

trip with Mr. Miles to the top of the mountain. This official, who lived in Jimtown, was a great hunter. He had held one and another political office for fifteen years and celebrated each election by going off into the mountains to shoot big game. On this occasion, he had his rifle with him, hoping to get a shot at the mountain lion that Kenyon and his companions had seen the day before.

While the first trip was being made, Hal, Frank, Byron, and Ferdinand were surrounded by their eager schoolmates and plied with numerous questions. Then the doctor, in order to simplify matters, asked everybody to keep still and suggested that Hal tell the story from beginning to end.

So Kenyon told the story of their adventure in detail. Before he had finished, the aeroplane returned and started on another trip, with Byron, Frank, and Ferdinand as passengers. The aviator had decided that, since the airship was built to carry three men including the operator, it ought to carry one man and three boys at once. The experiment proved that he was right.

By the time Mr. Miles returned for the doctor and Hal, the latter had satisfied the curiosity of

his schoolmates. Some of them begged for permission to make the trip also, but Dr. Byrd said that since it would be impossible to take all, he must limit his permission to those whom the coroner had asked to be present at the removal of the body from the mountain-top cave.

Finally, the entire party of eight men and boys was conveyed to the Flathead plateau. The landing place chosen this time was a level and comparatively smooth spot west of the patch of timber and east of the pool.

Hal, with the permission of Dr. Byrd, had brought with him the rifle that had been found in the cave. He, too, hoped to see the mountain lion again and get a shot at it. As they approached the landing place he examined closely the ruins of the homes of the cliff dwellers, where they had seen the panther on the day before, but it was no longer there.

"Wasn't that a funny place for cliff dwellers to build their homes?" Hal inquired as they were descending to the plateau.

"Yes, it is," replied the doctor. "I can't account for their going up so high, unless there was

unusual need of defense against some of their warlike neighbors."

"How do you suppose they got up here?" asked the boy.

"The same way you did probably — behind the waterfall. I imagine they were afraid to trust that secret passage alone to protect them against their enemies, so they made their homes high up in these cliffs as a second precaution."

"Let's go up in some of those caves before we go back," Hal proposed.

"I am planning to make as thorough an exploration of this plateau as possible to-day," the doctor replied. "But first we must investigate the death of this man whose body you found."

The other members of the party were awaiting the arrival of the last airship-load of passengers, as the coroner desired the presence of all the original witnesses when he removed the body. After all had been landed on the top of the mountain, no further delay was necessary, and they proceeded directly to the cave in the passage through the long ridge.

Two lanterns had been brought along, and with the aid of these the coroner made a careful in-

spection of the cave. He asked numerous questions in order to determine if the boys had destroyed or disarranged any clews that might lead to a clearing up of the mystery surrounding this strange life and death on the mountain top. Meanwhile, not an article of the contents of the cave was moved until the careful examination was finished. Mr. Huffman even caused Hal to lean his gun against the wall as nearly as it had been found as possible.

Then he and the doctor picked up the body and carried it out to the open to give it a thorough examination. There seemed to be no doubt that he had been slain by a wild beast. The body was badly mangled, particularly the upper part and the head. The clothes about the chest were ripped in shreds, indicating the savage nature of the slayer. But the clothing proved to be of good quality, indicating that their owner had not been a tramp.

"I bet he was a robber hiding from the police," Hal declared as the coroner began to search the dead man's pockets.

The next instant the official drew forth several envelopes and pieces of paper and began to ex-

amine them. Suddenly Dr. Byrd, who was watching this inspection closely, leaned forward and snatched an envelope from the coroner's hand.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "This is Maxwell, the instructor who stole my most valuable gems."

CHAPTER XXII

CLEARING HAL

With nervous haste, Dr. Byrd took a piece of folded paper from the envelope and examined it. The letter was short and had to do with a purchase from a mail order house. It was addressed to Rodney Maxwell, Boulder, Colorado, care of the Miners & Merchants' Bank.

"So that's where he was," the doctor muttered, half to himself. "The last I heard of him he was in Denver."

Coroner Huffman, meanwhile, was examining the other envelopes. Suddenly, he looked up at the doctor and said:

"I think I can give you some interesting information. This Miners & Merchants' Bank was robbed two or three months ago and the police are looking for this fellow Maxwell. He was a teller there, I believe."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the owner of Lakefarm. "It's singular that I didn't see it in the papers."

"The story was printed all right. You probably read only the headlines and missed his name. You don't read the newspapers the way we politicians do. Maxwell got away with thirty thousand dollars."

"I bet the money's in the cave," Hal ventured eagerly.

It was a natural suspicion, and they hastened the search through the pockets of the dead man's clothing. But nothing more was discovered and the party returned into the cave.

"Let's take everything outside and continue our examination in the sunlight," the doctor proposed.

"Good suggestion," said the coroner, picking up the box and starting for the entrance.

Dr. Byrd rolled up several blankets, tucked them under his arm and followed Mr. Huffman. The lifting of one of the blankets disclosed several cooking utensils, a bag of salt and half a dozen empty fruit cans. All these and other articles the boys picked up and carried outside beyond the western end of the passage and placed them on the ground.

First, the contents of the box were examined,

and they proved to be of great interest. On top were two books, then several newspapers and magazines. Next appeared several boxes of matches, two or three hundred cartridges, also in boxes, some collars, neckties and handkerchiefs; two shirts, and finally a small satchel, packed full and heavy.

Eagerly the coroner seized the latter and attempted to open it. But the clasp resisted his efforts. It was locked.

Remembering a bunch of keys he had found in one of Maxwell's pockets, the coroner produced it and tried several in the lock. The fourth fitted and turned easily, and the satchel fell open.

Exclamations of eagerness and satisfaction burst from the lips of the onlookers. The object of their search was found. The little valise was full of paper money, assorted in denominations and done up in small packages with strips of paper pinned around them.

On each binding strip was written with pencil some figures representing the amount contained in the package. These made the counting of the money easy. In the bottom of the satchel was more than a thousand dollars in gold coins, the

counting of which required more time than the totaling of all the assorted certificates and notes. The coroner made an itemized list of these packages and coins according to denominations and amounts. On footing them, he found that the total was $30,380.

The official now drew up a certificate of their discovery at the foot of the itemized list, and, at his request, they all signed it. Then he packed the money back in the valise, with the statement and certificate on top, and snapped the latch and locked it.

"There, that's all done," Mr. Huffman announced. "What else have we here?"

Boys and men now began to overhaul the other personal effects of the slain robber. They shook out the blankets, inspected the empty fruit cans, looked into the cooking utensils and pushed their hands or fingers into the pockets of the two extra suits of clothing. In one of these pockets, Dr. Byrd found a small metal box about twice the thickness of an ordinary pocket match-safe.

With more curiosity than eagerness, he attempted to open the box, but it resisted his efforts.

Mr. Huffman, observing what he had found, held out his hand saying:

"Let me try it. I've had a good deal of experience breaking secrets."

Dr. Byrd gave him the box, and the coroner turned it over several times in an effort to find a clasp or catch. Presently he discovered a tiny button at one end and pressed on it with his thumb nail, but with no result. After considerable manipulation he finally solved the secret by pressing both sides with thumb and fingers of one hand while he "picked" the button with the other thumb nail.

Now was the time for a few more gasps of surprise. And they came. Dr. Byrd's right hand shot forward like a "Jack-in-the-box" let loose, to seize the object of interest. The coroner, however, held on with both hands to prevent the eager doctor from spilling the sparkling contents.

"Those are mine!" exclaimed the Lakefarm owner. "Those are the rubies and diamonds Maxwell stole from my collection over two years ago."

"Whew!" exploded Mr. Huffman. "This sure is a day of discoveries."

"It's a week of discoveries, it's a month of discoveries, it's a whole summer of discoveries for Lakefarm and Mummy Cañon," declared Dr. Byrd with excusable excitement. "I tell you, this has been a history making season for Colorado and even the United States. Think of what has happened here this summer! Why it's simply stupendous. When this cañon becomes a popular summer resort it will have a most interesting history for advertising purposes."

"Yes, you're right," agreed Mr. Huffman. "And these runaway boys have done about all of it, haven't they?" he added with a mischievous look at the five young Scouts standing around and eagerly listening to the conversation.

"Well, I don't know but you're right," admitted the doctor slowly. "Kenyon discovered the cave behind the waterfall, and all of them took a part in the discoveries that followed. In fact, I think every one of their names should be given to some point or feature of interest on this mountain."

"Let's call the cave behind the waterfall Kenyon Cave," proposed Byron.

"That's a bright idea," declared the doctor.

"It sounds well. What shall we call the waterfall itself?"

"The Screaming Cataract," Frank proposed with a little reminiscent shudder and a grin.

"Good again!" Dr. Byrd exclaimed.

"And that cliff where we stood when we shot the arrows into the cañon — let's call that Whistling Arrow Point," suggested Ferdinand.

"Keep it up, boys, and you'll soon have everything well named," said the coroner with appreciative cheeriness.

Just then all were startled by an interruption from Mr. Miles who had been busy while the others were exclaiming over the discovery of the money and the gems. In one hand he held a coat and in the other several objects the size of small potatoes which he had drawn from one of the pockets. The objects were of a soiled yellow.

"I've found my nuggets! I've found my nuggets!" cried the aviator gleefully. "Ha!, you're fully exonerated now, and the mystery of the bag of specimens in the cave is solved. Maxwell found them in the cañon, took them behind the waterfall, picked out the nuggets, left the bag in the cave

and accidentally dropped one of the lumps of gold!"

Before the excitement of this discovery was over, another thriller was added to the rapid succession of events. Suddenly from the very cave in which they had seen the mountain lion on the day before, issued a dark object, which bounded down an incline of stones and earth and sped with swift leaps past the aeroplane and off toward the edge of the mountain-top plateau.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE AIR.

Coroner Huffman was quickest to act. His rifle was leaning against a rock near by, and he snatched it up and took two shots at the flying animal before it disappeared. Apparently the panther was not hit.

But Mr. Miles was scarcely less active. Like a sprinter, he started for his airship, twenty yards away, calling out:

"Come on, a couple of you. We'll chase him. Bring the guns."

There was a general race toward the aeroplane. The aviator leaped aboard and busied himself rapidly with the motor. As the rest lined up before the machine, Dr. Byrd said:

"Coroner, you and Hal get aboard. You have guns."

This being a logical suggestion, it was adopted by the two mentioned. They climbed into the cabin, the wicket was closed, and almost instantly came the chug-chug of the engine and the great

fan propellers began to revolve. A deep quiver, a few spasmodic jerks, and the airship started forward, bumped over the uneven ground, and rose into the air.

The front and rear of the cabin were open except for the aluminum-bar inclosures, and Hal looked back and waved his hand at the doctor and the other boys, who were executing various capers and cheering lustily. The next instant almost, the airship passed beyond the edge of the plateau, and pilot and passengers directed their vision to a search for the mountain lion.

Mr. Miles called their attention to a port in the floor of the cabin and advised them to make use of that, as well as of the ports in the sides and the open front and rear. Mr. Huffman slid back a cover of the floor opening, two feet in diameter and protected with aluminum bars. Then they began an inspection of the mountain side as the ship circled around and around as close to the tree tops as was deemed safe.

They were not long in finding the fleeing animal. He was leaping with long easy bounds, down the steep and craggy slope — too steep and irregular for a man to climb or descend. The aviator

steered the air craft right over him, and the coroner drew a bead on the cat through the floor port. With the discharge of the gun, Hal looked eagerly at the beast, expecting to see him tumble over, but he was disappointed.

"Blast the luck!" muttered the coroner, who was ordinarily a good shot. "I don't believe I can hit him from the moving airship."

"Let me try it," Hal shouted above the noise of the propellers, having read the meaning of the expression on the face of his companion.

The latter moved aside and the boy thrust the muzzle of his gun through the opening. Taking careful aim, he pulled the trigger, but with no better success. Even as the gun was discharged, he felt the difficulty of their hunt. To shoot a rapidly moving animal from a rapidly moving airship is no easy task.

Hal's shot, however, seemed to be the signal for an altering of the course of the fleeing panther. The latter evidently saw the source of his danger, and turned suddenly to the left and bounded over crags and through patches of fir and spruce to the southern side of the mountain. The pursuers flew after him, firing at the moving target every now

and then. Finally the beast landed on the ledge of the " mummy " from which the cañon took its name. There he halted a moment, looking upward at his flying enemy. Another shot from Hal's rifle caused him to leap so suddenly that the boy believed he had hit him; but if so, the animal was not seriously injured. He bounded on, down the very course by which the boys had ascended the mountain. Finally he stopped and gazed in a puzzled manner at the boulder that blocked his entrance through the roof of Kenyon Cave behind the Screaming Cataract, as recently named.

He stuck his head through the fissure beside the bowlder and seemed about to leap when Coroner Huffman fired again. Possibly he was hit; at any rate, he drew his head back and bounded along the steep side of the mountain to the left. Several rods he sprang in this direction; then down, down he went with wonderful swiftness and agility, until he reached the new railing-bordered walk between Flathead and the river. This seemed to puzzle him a little, but he hesitated only a moment. Then the occupants of the airship were astonished to see the animal bound along the

walk, over the waterfall bridge and behind the cataract.

Quickly the coroner stepped close to the aviator and shouted:

"Fly back to the top of the mountain. We've got to have some lanterns."

Miles caught the significance of the suggestion and in a very short time the airship had circled upward and over Flathead and alighted near the other boys and Dr. Byrd.

The purpose of their return was quickly explained, the lanterns were taken aboard, and away they flew again. In a few minutes they landed near the head of the rapids in Mummy Cañon and then proceeded to cross the first bridge and advance up the walk, with lighted lanterns, toward the Screaming Cataract.

Mr. Miles was stationed outside with Hal's gun, to shoot the animal if he should spring past the other two, who crossed the second bridge into the cave. Each of the latter carried a lantern and they advanced carefully, flashing their lights as far ahead as possible.

Around the elbow of the cave they proceeded without catching sight of their quarry. Even in

the farther chamber they were somewhat puzzled until by flashing their lights over the sloping wall, they perceived two shining eyes high up near the bowlder that choked the upper exit.

Mr. Huffman set his lantern down and put the stock of his gun to his shoulder. But even as he sighted along the barrel, the gleaming eyes had disappeared.

"Look out!" yelled Hal. A horrible screech came from the blank darkness. Huffman raised his rifle and fired in the direction of the sound. The thundering report of the gun almost deafened them, but shrill above even that came a second scream. The next instant Hal felt a big body catch him between the legs. Down he went, his lantern flying from his hand and shattering against the rocky wall.

When he rose to his feet it was to see Mr. Huffman, lantern in hand, careering over the rock-strewn floor toward the mouth of the cave. "Look out there, Miles!" he yelled as he ran.

Hal scrambled his way out as well as he could in the dark, expecting every second to hear the report of Mr. Miles' rifle. Instead he heard a

shout and then a cry of pain. As he came to the cave entrance he saw the cause.

Mr. Miles had been taken unawares. The lion had come hurtling at him at too close range for him to use the rifle. Blinded perhaps by the sudden glare of daylight, the animal had charged full at him, and down Miles had gone. There he lay at the very edge of the bridge, clutching at the railing with one hand, and holding the other over his stomach.

"I wouldn't mind, if he'd hit me anywhere else," he gasped, in mingled pain and laughter.

"Where's your gun?" asked Mr. Huffman suddenly.

"Where's the lion?" Miles asked in return.

"Do you think he swallowed it?" asked Hal with a chuckle. At that they all gave way, as both Hal and the coroner had been aching to do, so comical was Mr. Miles' pain-drawn face.

"I'm afraid it must have been knocked over the falls," Mr. Miles managed at last to suggest. "He hit me pretty hard, and my game leg isn't any too strong — especially when the pesky animal tried football on me."

The gun was undoubtedly gone, and it must have fallen into the water.

"We'll have to come back and dive for it," added Hal with a sigh, for in a way he looked upon the rifle as his own. "That'll be fun for us Scouts."

"I hate to have that lion get away," said the coroner regretfully; "but I suppose we might as well go back."

"Suppose I take you two to Lakefarm and then go back from there for the rest," said Miles as they walked back toward the aeroplane. "It will save time."

So it was decided, and the two were soon dropped at Lakefarm, where they were awaited by an eager crowd of boys. Then Mr. Miles whirred back toward the top of Flathead, soon to return with his first load. On the last trip he brought back the body of the dead Maxwell and Dr. Byrd.

"Well, boys, we've had a pretty strenuous day — or days. I think that the Boy Scouts of the Air deserve a little holiday."

"The Boy Scouts *of the Air?*" asked one of the waiting group.

"Yes, the Boy Scouts of the Air, of Flathead Mountain, with a membership of five."

"Oh!" came a disappointed murmur from the rest.

"But I think we'll make the holiday general, and maybe the Air Patrol can enroll some new members. So to-morrow we'll just scatter and enjoy ourselves our own way." The shout that went up left no doubt that the decision was popular.

"Three cheers for the Boy Scouts of the Air!" came from a score of throats as the doctor turned to go in.

"Rah for Doctor Byrd!" came from the five Boy Scouts of the Air in return.

CHAPTER XXIV

MOUNTAIN LION BRIDGE

"How you going to spend your holiday?" asked Bad of Hal the next morning when the two chanced to meet on the campus.

"Sh! Not so loud," was the reply. "I'm going to explore Kenyon Cave."

"But the doctor — "

"He said we could do as we pleased to-day. I'm going to see if I can't get that gun again."

"And hunt the lion? But it's under the falls."

"I don't think it is. That lion hit Mr. Miles hard enough to knock him down. That gun must have gone a flying. Maybe it dropped in shallow water. And the biggest part of the falls is on the other side anyway. I'll chance it."

"And we could take some grapple hooks — "

"We?" asked Hal.

"Sure. I'm going along. Suppose that lion'd show up — "

"Yes, suppose. What'd you do? Save my life

by running away and getting the cat to follow you? ''

'' Never mind. You ran from it yourself the other day. You just watch me when we find it again. I'll—''

'' Clout it in the jaw? '' laughed Hal.

'' I know where there's grapple hooks,'' Bad suggested. '' I'll get them.'' And away he went, to return in a few minutes with a tangled mass of cords and hooks stuffed under his coat. '' Ready to go now? ''

'' Soon as I get a lantern. I hid one inside the hollow elm next to the road. Come on.''

So the two started out on their three-mile trudge, stopping to pick up the lantern and a lunch that was likewise hidden within the tree. '' Divvies,'' said Hal generously as he shoved this into his pocket.

It was not long before Mummy Cañon was in sight. They crossed the bridge and made their way slowly along the path toward the Screaming Cataract. Just before they came to the bridge they stopped. Bad sat down and began to pull off his shoes and stockings, but Hal merely stood

looking at the water, that was boiling and foaming even along the shore.

"It can't be very deep in there this side the falls," he observed. "The gun could easy have fallen right in next to shore. Of course it could have gone the other way, but that ain't likely, as the lion hit Miles in this direction. If it did go toward the middle we'll never get it — unless we happen to grapple it."

"What you going to do? Try to grapple it first or dive?"

"Or wade if it isn't too deep. But first of all I'm going to take a look inside the cave. I want to see if that rock is wedged in hard like it looked from above."

"What for? Suppose the lion's in there!"

Hal laughed. "He got too good a scare in there yesterday to come back right away."

"But why not find the gun first? What good'll it do you if the rock isn't tight. Come on, I'm going in." And Bad continued taking off his clothes.

"No, I'll cool off first. You go ahead. I'll go up on the bridge and show you where the gun most likely fell." He gathered a handful of small

stones and standing on the bridge, began to throw them into the water, marking off a small circle that extended from the edge of the falls to the shore. "It ought to be inside that."

"All right. Here goes," called Bad as he began wading away from the bank. "U-u-gh! it's cold. So deep," he added, ducking himself under to the chin, pretending he had found a step-off — to come up to his waist a minute later.

"Call me if you find it," Hal said, after lighting his lantern with a match, Boy Scout style being too slow just then. "I'll be with you in a few minutes."

He disappeared within the cave, and Bad continued wading out toward the edge of the fall, feeling for the gun with his toes. This was an easy matter, as the bottom was a firm sort of sand-mud, smooth and gently sloping. The water deepened till it was up to his neck, but that was all. Out under the falls it was doubtless many times deeper, but here the thin trickle from above had not worn any hole.

"I guess I'll cut in toward the bridge," he said to himself, "and then work over along the bank." As he came under the bridge he stood there a

moment, holding to one of the timbers, for at this point the undertow from the falls was rather strong.

As he stood there his mischievous spirit prompted him to play a trick on Hal. Wouldn't it be a lark to climb up under the bridge and stretch himself out along the timbers and wait there for Hal? What would he think when he came out and found no Bad in the water? He had laughed at Bad's scare when the plank tipped, that night when Kenyon Cave was discovered. Here was a good chance to get even.

So Bad wormed himself up one of the posts, and after a good deal of squirming found himself a firm and fairly comfortable resting place where two bracing timbers formed a V-shaped bed. Right above him was a large knothole, within a few inches of his eyes. He lay there and waited some time, his only view the tumbling water just beneath, and above, a knothole sight of the cliff and a patch of blue sky.

Once he was tempted to call, but waited. Then, above him, on the boards of the bridge, he heard a quiet footfall. It sounded like bare feet; perhaps that was why Hal had been so long — he had

stopped to undress. The footfalls ceased. Bad fancied he heard a curious sniffing noise, that kept up till it got on his nerves. What could Hal be doing that would make such a funny noise? Bad tried to look through the knothole. Only blue sky and gray cliff could be seen. But still that sniff-sniff kept up.

Putting his mouth to the knothole, he drew in his breath and then "Wow!" he shouted.

But the answer was not what he expected. A low snarl came in reply, and the snarl was too animal-like to have come from Hal. Bad almost fell from his perch in his sudden fright. Again he put his eye to the hole, but jerked back with a scream. A cold, damp something had touched his face, and that something he knew instinctively was the muzzle of an animal.

Perhaps it was this thought that made him lose his balance. At any rate, almost before he realized it, he had toppled out of his seat and into the water. For an instant he floundered, then struck out, under water, to get as far away as he could. He did not stop to reason that the animal, whatever it was, would hardly attack him in the water; he merely wanted to get away.

Then suddenly he stopped and came to his feet. His hand had struck something solid. It felt not unlike the branch of a tree or a stick — or a rifle barrel. It was standing straight up in the water. For a second he groped about, then struck it again. With a feeling of triumph he grasped it and gave a tug that freed it from the mud. It was the rifle.

Then he looked toward the bridge. There, its teeth bared in a snarl, was the mountain lion of the day before. It was not crouched, but stood there, its head going from side to side in an impatient shake, its tail beating the bridge floor angrily. But for an instant only it remained so.

With an alert turn of the head it directed its attention to the cave. It had heard something. Bad heard the same sound; it was Hal coming out, and Bad stood as if paralyzed.

"Stay in the cave!" he yelled, suddenly regaining command of his voice.

"I'm coming," came the indistinct reply. "Did you find the gun?"

"Stay in the cave! The lion's on the bridge!"

"I can't understand you." Bad had difficulty in hearing the words, broken by the irregularity of

the passage and drowned by the noise of the falls. "I'm coming fast as I can — my lantern's out."

"Oh-h —" groaned Bad, "what shall I do? Don't come out!" he shrieked again. There was no reply. The lion had not stirred, crouching expectantly at the opening. When Hal appeared, it would spring — and Bad shuddered at the thought.

But the gun! Suddenly he remembered that. He looked at the breech; it was unrusted. He threw a shell into place; then he thought of the barrel. One glance told him it was choked with mud.

What could he do? He remembered hearing of a gun that had burst because there was mud in the end of the barrel. True, that was a shotgun. Dared he risk it? He brought the gun to his shoulder — then hesitated.

Bad was no coward, but he knew the risk. "Hal!" he yelled for the last time. There was no reply, but the click of footsteps and a loud "Ouch!" told him his call had done no good. He saw the lion crouch still lower, the leg muscles tightened, and then — Bang!

Bad had shut his eyes as he pulled the trigger.

Furthermore, he had not held the rifle very tight to his shoulder; he picked himself out of the water and gave a frightened look toward the bridge. The lion was still there but no longer crouching. He was whirling round and round, a struggling bundle of rage and scratching claws. His savage whines sent the cold chills up and down Bad's back. Coming too close to the edge of the bridge, the lion rolled off — and Bad hastily scrambled his way toward the bank.

"Hello!" called Hal, appearing just then in the cave entrance. "What's up, Bad?"

"Nothing," said Bad limply.

"Nothing! Is that what makes you look so sick. What you been doing with the gun!"

"Nothing." Then he added slyly but shakily: "I just clouted Mr. Lion in the jaw."

"The lion! Was it you that shot? Where is he?" came in rapid succession.

"I believe he went downstairs there to get a drink," laughed Bad, his voice and legs getting stronger. "If you'll help me to fish him out, we'll lug him back to Lakefarm, and s'prise the natives."

And that was certainly what they did, as, a

couple of hours later, they arrived, fagged out but proud, at Lakefarm Institute and dropped their trophy at the feet of Mr. Byrd, who, with Mr. Frankland and Mr. Miles and Mr. Porter, as well as all the Boy Scouts, was waiting to receive them.

"And who shot him?" asked Dr. Byrd, after the slain beast had been inspected and admired to the full expectations of the two heroes.

"It was Frank," Hal replied.

"Not *Bad?*" asked Dr. Byrd, quite seriously.

"No — Frank. Bad has made *good*, and he's been promoted. From now on he's Frank."